MAHATMA GANDHI

Volume-1

The Early Phase

PYARELAL

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Dr. Radhakrishnan, *President of India, in his Preface to the book, writes:*

Shri Pyarelal, who for the better part of his life lived with Gandhiji, has already brought out in two volumes *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*. He is now bringing out a volume *Mahatma Gandhi—The Early Phase*. The present volume gives an account of Gandhiji's life from his birth and childhood till his first brief visit to India from South Africa in 1896.

In South Africa, Gandhiji struggled to remove race discrimination. . . . Large parts of Africa are now in a position to shape their future according to their own will and genius. In the United States, the Civil Rights Bill has been passed into Law. American negroes are getting into their own. Gandhiji's influence has been, to some extent, responsible for this increasing recognition of equality of races.

Gandhiji was essentially a man of religion. For him politics was religion in action. His religion was broad, non-sectarian and non-dogmatic. He believed in the ultimate Supreme Being and he says that for thirty years he struggled to see God face to face. An authentically religious man is one who has this personal insight into the nature of God. When once we

(Continued on back flap)



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MAHATMA GANDHI — THE EARLY PHASE

530

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By the same Author

THE EPIC FAST
STATUS OE INDIAN PRINCES
A PILGRIMAGE FOR PEACE
A NATION-BUILDER AT WORK
GANDHIAN TECHNIQUES IN THE MODERN WORLD
MAHAMA GANDHI—THE LAST PHASE (VOL. I & II)
TOWARDS NEW HORIZONS
THROWN TO THE WOLVES—ABDUL GHAFFAR
MAHATMA GANDHI—THE DISCOVERY OF SATYAGRAHA
MAHATMA GANDHI—THE BIRTH OF SATYAGRAHA

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MAHATMA GANDHI

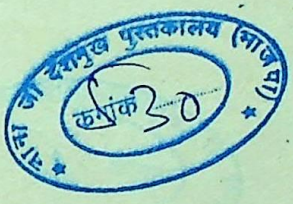
VOLUME I

The Early Phase

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by

PYARELAL



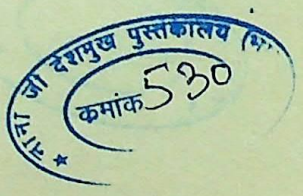
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TO MY SAINTED MOTHER
AND SAINTLY BROTHER
OF BLESSED
MEMORY

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Let hundreds like me perish, but let truth prevail. Let us not reduce the standard of truth even by a hair's breadth for judging erring mortals like myself.

M. K. GANDHI

Generations to come, it may be, will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

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FOREWORD

प्रधान मंत्री भवन
PRIME MINISTER'S HOUSE
NEW DELHI
May 28, 1963

No. 1348-PMH/63

My dear Pyarelal,

* * *

As for your book on Bapu, I shall endeavour to give you a foreword for it. But I must previously read most of it at least. Perhaps you could send me the typescript as it comes out.

I am rather heavily occupied and am going out of Delhi on the 2nd June morning. Perhaps you could come to see me on the 1st June at 9-30 A.M. in my office in the External Affairs Ministry.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

Shri Pyarelal,
2-4, Theatre Communication Building,
Connaught Circus,
New Delhi.

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PREFACE

Shri Pyarelal, who for the better part of his life lived with Gandhiji, has already brought out in two volumes *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase.* He is now bringing out a volume *Mahatma Gandhi—The Early Phase.* The present volume gives an account of Gandhiji's life from his birth and childhood till his first brief visit to India from South Africa in 1896. Shri Jawaharlal Nehru was to have written a short foreword to this, but, on account of his unfortunate decease, I am writing a few words by way of a preface.

In South Africa, Gandhiji struggled to remove race discrimination. Though South Africa is still dominated by race prejudice and *apartheid,* other parts of Africa have attained liberation from colonial bondage. Large parts of Africa are now in a position to shape their future according to their own will and genius. In the United States, the Civil Rights Bill has been passed into Law. American negroes are getting into their own. Gandhiji's influence has been, to some extent, responsible for this increasing recognition of equality of races. It is very much to be hoped that even the rulers in South Africa will understand their own enlightened self-interest, recognise the winds of change that are blowing over the whole world and work for greater equality among its citizens.

Gandhiji was essentially a man of religion. For him politics was religion in action. His religion was broad, non-sectarian and non-dogmatic. He believed in the ultimate Supreme Being and he says that for thirty years he struggled to see God face to face. An authentically religious man is one who has this personal insight into the nature of God. When once we have this insight, we do not quarrel over the names we give to Him or the approaches we adopt to reach Him. So, he had a catholic mind and used in his prayers selections from the different scriptures of the world. *Sarva Dharma Samānatva* (equality of all religions) was an essential part of his faith. His universality of outlook showed itself in his dealings with others.

In modern life, which is full of strains and stresses, we come across many individuals who show signs of mental disturbance. All of them are mentally and morally impoverished and wish to seek a still point in this ever-changing world. In this machine age, much of our life is barren, harsh and brutish. This phenomenon is not peculiar to our country but in this "twist" age there is a large amount of rootlessness, dislocation and desolation all round. We are drifting on the surface of life and have no sense of purpose. That is why we feel impotent when

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we face overwhelming forces of nature and of history. But man, we should know, is an adaptable creature. To give dignity to the human being, he must develop a purpose. Religion has been effective all these centuries to give such a purpose to human life. We need it—a religion, which is intellectually satisfying, ethically uplifting and spiritually comforting. Such was Gandhiji's religion. We today have to adopt in our daily lives and public affairs the principle of race equality, the spirit of true religion and non-violence as far as it is practicable. Our scriptures have said that though it may not be possible for us to abolish violence altogether, we should try to reduce its scope as much as possible.

When Gandhiji was asked about the atom bomb which was dropped on Japan, he said that he was not perturbed by it. On the contrary he felt more certain than ever that after that nothing else was left for mankind but to adopt non-violence. He was firmly of the opinion that moral ends must be won by moral means. While others in our country adopted non-violence as a matter of policy, with Gandhiji non-violence and truth were matters of faith. Loyalty to truth and individual integrity require us to hold on to our convictions. It is not a question of our merely holding an idea but the idea must hold us, enter our being, possess us and transform us. We may disagree with the whole world but we should not disagree with ourselves. *ātmārthe pṛthvīṁ tyajet*, for the sake of one's *self*, one may have to abandon the world. In these days, when there is so much talk about piling up of nuclear armaments, Gandhiji would have liked us to work for general and complete disarmament and peace. Love and brotherhood should be the basis for peace and not fear. Today, the latter is being used in a wide measure for keeping the world safe from war. That we are able to contemplate with equanimity the making of nuclear weapons, which, when used, will erase the human race from the earth's surface, is a measure of our degradation. He, therefore, felt that the obstacles to peace—narrow nationalism, racialism, faith in violence—should be abandoned by all nations.

In the excitement of modern history, we have to steer our lives by the principles of race equality. Towards the end of his life, he found that communal feelings were as fierce as ever and that his trusted lieutenants acquiesced in the partition of the country which was against his will.

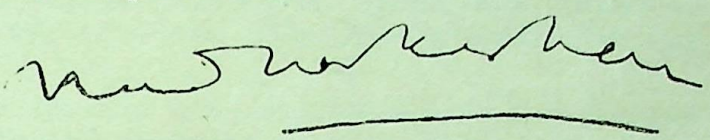
Disillusion entered his heart before the bullet entered his body. In letters, which he wrote at this time, the anguish of his soul comes out.

All the same, the ideals he worked for and for which he lived and died are there to inspire us and if we remember them in our moments of doubts and indecision, they may lead us to the right path.

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Those who read Shri Pyarelal's writings on Gandhiji will be struck by the prophetic quality of Gandhiji's genius, his practical good sense and his love for humanity. Gokhale's memorable words, which he said in 1912, have been confirmed by a lifetime of devotion, dedication and sacrifice:

> A purer, a nobler, a braver and a more exalted spirit has never moved on this earth. . . . He is a man who may well be described as a man among men, a hero among heroes, a patriot among patriots, and we may well say that in him Indian humanity at the present time has really reached its high-water mark.



Rashtrapati Bhavan,
New Delhi.
January 23, 1965

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INTRODUCTION

Mahatma Gandhi—The Early Phase is the first volume of a projected series. It covers the story of Gandhiji's life up to his first short visit from South Africa to India, where he went to fetch his family in June, 1896, when he was barely twenty-seven years old. The next volume will complete the story of his Satyagraha struggle in South Africa and will be followed, God willing, by two more volumes to bring the narrative up to the point where *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase* begins.

I have already described in the introduction to my book *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase* the circumstances under which I was drawn into the preparation of those two volumes as an intensive, self-contained independent study, before embarking on the multi-volume biography of Gandhiji that I had taken up. Thereafter I had to wait till fresh arrangements could be made to enable me to continue my work. I am grateful to our late Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, for the initiative he took in this regard with the Gandhi National Memorial Trust under whose auspices the present volume is being produced. Shortly before he left us he reiterated his wish that the work must at all cost be seen through to the finish.

In bringing out this volume after the two volumes of *The Last Phase*, covering as they do the story of the most dramatic part of Gandhiji's life, I felt myself in the unenviable position of a producer of a play who is forced by circumstances to present the first act after his audience has seen the fifth act staged.

This initial handicap was further accentuated by the difficulty of obtaining fresh original material in the absence of any family records worth the name. Even State records relating to Gandhiji's ancestors are incomplete, due to political instability and the easy-going tradition of the rulers of the Indian States in those days. The portion of these records that does exist is too disorganised to be easily accessible. Whatever I have been able to extract with the help of Dr. Jivraj Mehta and Shri Balvantrai Mehta, the previous and the present Chief Ministers of Gujarat, has gone into this book.

In 1950 in an extensive tour of Kathiawar I was able to meet with and record the statements of about a score of people who were either contemporaries of Gandhiji in the High School or were otherwise intimately associated with the events relating to his early days. I also spoke with several of his relations—including his venerable aged sister. None of them is alive today.

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Gandhiji used to tell me that his would-be biographer, in order to do full justice to his job, would need to visit at least South Africa and England for research. Unfortunately I could do neither.

I had consequently to fall back on what I had heard from Gandhiji's own lips and garnered during my twenty-eight years of close association with him. This I was able to follow up in part with the help that by a stroke of good luck I received of an English friend, Ian Le Maistre, the present research worker in England for the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. He had met me during Gandhiji's tour of Bengal in 1945 and volunteered purely as a labour of love to rummage the British Museum or any other source for what I needed to have looked up in regard to the lad Gandhi's life as a student in England.

As early as 1949 I had opened correspondence with General Smuts —whom I had had the rare fortune to meet in England in 1931—to enable me to go to South Africa for necessary research in connection with my work. Unfortunately when my letter reached him he was on his sick bed. Shortly afterwards he died. And so that part of my plan also fell through.

I subsequently contacted some of Gandhiji's associates, who were still in South Africa, for their help. They generously responded. But this was hardly an adequate substitute for research conducted personally on the spot. I wish it were still possible for me to go to South Africa for the sake of the next volume which is to cover the most vital part of Gandhiji's life and work. I feel the need for it more than ever. The ranks of Gandhiji's old associates in South Africa are fast thinning. Of those with whom I started correspondence and who helped me with information, Messrs Ritch, Godfrey, Manilal Gandhi and Sohrabji Rustomji are no more. The indomitable super-nonagenarian Vincent Lawrence is bed-ridden.

To most of us this period of South African history is a *terra incognita*. The South African personality had not yet fully developed, political boundaries were fast changing, and the political scene was dissolving with the rapidity of the outlines of pictures in a phantasmagoria, when Gandhiji first went there. Consequently social, religious and historical developments that had a vital bearing on his life and activities and which guided his judgment and course of action during this period are often barely touched upon even in standard works on South African history. Luckily, Gandhiji had brought with him from South Africa a boxful of correspondence and other documents relating to his work there. The bulk of them have since been photostated by the Gandhi National Memorial Trust. He had also maintained a systematic and fairly exhaustive record of clippings from contemporary newspapers for the period 1889-1900 in thirteen scrapbooks. He had spoken to me about them. But as they were not al-

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lowed to be taken out of the Sabarmati Sangrahalaya, I had to get them photostated (and of course laminated for those in possession) by the National Archives before I could proceed with my work. They were pretty often in a bad shape—sometimes mutilated or jumbled into a pie, or obscured by the growth of black fungus. At other times the source and date line were clipped out, or obliterated, or were otherwise missing. The portions, that were mildewed or were covered with gummed strips of butter paper for repairs, became altogether undecipherable in the photostats, though in the original record—which had in the meantime been returned to the owners—the writing could still sometimes with effort be made out. All this resulted in loss of weeks upon weeks of precious time and no end of agonising eye-strain in spite of the use of higher-power magnifying glasses and other devices on my part and on the part of my colleagues, in order to decipher them.

I had likewise to get quite a lot of old records, source books, and even reference books from various institutions laminated for safe handling, and as an inducement to the custodians to let me have them photostated for my use. This held up and frequently delayed the work.

Absence of reference facilities in India added to the difficulty. To verify the date or source of an important clipping, where it was missing or could not be deciphered, or for a "Who's Who" of the *dramatis personae* one had to seek the assistance of friends in South Africa, or of the editors of newspapers there, with varying success.

I was particularly struck in the course of my research by the way the historical developments in India, England and South Africa acted and reacted upon one another; how closely they were interrelated and how utterly impossible it is fully to understand them without regarding them as an organically related whole.

To the reader, who wishes to follow the story of this part of Gandhiji's life intelligently and with profit, a close knowledge of the historical background and of related contemporary events both in India and in South Africa is an absolute necessity. The five chapters following the opening chapter, "A Portent", in Part One of the book, and Chapter XV, "Bitter Brew", in Part Three will be found indispensable by a serious student of Gandhiji's life, who wishes to get at the root of the problem that Gandhiji had to tackle, the inner springs of his action, the colossal odds that were arrayed against him, the things he did and refrained from doing and the reasons why.

The relevance and necessity of these chapters will become more and more apparent as we proceed with our story. The reader who takes the trouble to closely acquaint himself with the contents of these chapters will find himself richly rewarded for his time and patience—especially when he comes to the soul stirring drama of the epic struggle that is to follow in the next volume. For the convenience of the reader cross-references have been provided wherever necesary.

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I regret that with a view to economising space I have to omit a comprehensive chronology of events in Gandhiji's life covered in this volume with parallel columns of collateral events in India and South Africa, that I had prepared. I have also left out an exhaustive "Who's Who" of various officials in South Africa and England connected with the story chronicled here and a table of the dates during which they held office.

I have in some cases departed from the dates and sequence of events, relating to certain incidents in Gandhiji's career, as given in his own writings. In every such case I have stated my full reasons with evidence, either in the text itself or in "references and notes". I have also taken the liberty in some places to use words that I had actually heard from Gandhiji's lips, or to give my own translation of some of the quotations from Gandhiji's *Autobiography* in the original Gujarati, where I felt that the corresponding version given in *The Story of My Experiments With Truth* was either faulty or not sufficiently clear.

An amazing story of the mingling of the streams of eastern and western thought from which he derived his spiritual nourishment, and a meteoric rise to recognition and fame unfolds to a student of this phase of Gandhiji's life. A shrinking, shy, immature, callow youth, unsure of himself and baffled by life's jigsaw puzzle, finds himself—an utter stranger in a strange land, where a freak of fortune had thrown him—suddenly confronted by the challenge of racial and political prejudice at its worst in the buccaneer phase of Imperialist expansion at the close of the turbulent nineteenth century. Armed with nothing save unsoiled integrity of conscience, and utter surrender to the spirit of truth, undeterred by fear of where it might lead him he takes up that challenge, and in the short span of two years becomes a factor to be reckoned with. Practically single handed, he changes the course of political events in Natal, inspiring many with fear bordering on awe, but not unmixed with admiration and even affection—this in white and black, friend and foe alike. Whence came this strength and what was the secret of his alchemy? To find an answer to this question this study is devoted.

PYARELAL

Ahmedabad,
30th January, 1965.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe special thanks to the late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who sponsored this project and the Gandhi National Memorial Trust for making the necessary arrangements and providing the facilities needed for it; to the Navajivan Publishing House, who have taken up the publication of the volumes of the multi-volume biography and have spared no pains in its execution; to Prof. L. Massignon of Sorbonne University, Ian Le Maister and Vincent Lawrence for looking up and providing me with information whenever approached, and to several friends who have helped in revising the typescript purely as a labour of love. They include St. Nihal Singh, Mr A. E. Charlton, Prof. K. Swaminathan and Prof. Erik H. Erikson and Joan Erikson. I am grateful also to my assistants Shri Sunil Kumar Gupta and Dewan Vasudev, and other members of the staff for their patient industry in what they have looked upon as a joint enterprise.

I must thank the Gandhi National Memorial Sangrahalaya, New Delhi, and the Sabarmati Sangrahalaya for allowing me the use of photostated material relating to Gandhiji; the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi and the Publications Division of the Government of India for rendering me help of various kinds; Mrs Rukmini Arundale and the late Mrs Polak for loaning me some rare books relating to my work; Shri P. S. Joshi for providing information about, and the Institute of Race Relations, Johannesburg, for obtaining for me, literature on South Africa not obtainable elsewhere; the *Star* of Johannesburg for providing photostats of reports relating to Gandhiji; Mrs Sushila Manilal Gandhi for providing some photos; and Mr Roy Walker for a complete set of photostats of Gandhiji's contributions to *The Vegetarian*, while he was studying in England.

My thanks are due for their kind permission to give quotations in my book from their copyright matter to Messrs Ernest Benn Limited, London; Mr John M. Watkins of 21 Cecil Courts, London; Messrs Jonathan Cape Limited, London; Messrs Oxford University Press, Bombay; Messrs Prentice-Hall, Inc., Windsor; Messrs Longmans, Green & Co. Ltd., London; Messrs Faber and Faber Ltd., London; Messrs George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London; Messrs Cassell and Company Ltd., London; and Messrs Methuen & Co. Ltd., London.

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Messrs Jonathan Cape, London; Messrs John Lehmann, London; Messrs Victor Gollancz Ltd., London; respectively for the quotations that I have used from F. Addington Symonds' *The Johannesburg Story*, Henry Gibbs' *Background to Bitterness*, Sarah Gertrude Millin's *The People of South Africa* and *The South Africans*, Earl of Ronaldshay's *The Heart of Aryavarta*, Alan Paton's *Hope for South Africa*, Sarah Gertrude Millin's *Rhodes*, Will Durant's *The Case for India*, Reginald Reynold's *The White Sahibs in India*, Tikhon Polner's *Tolstoy and His Wife*, Ernest J. Simmons' *Leo Tolstoy* and Alexandra Tolstoy's *Tolstoy*.

Last but not least I must put on record my deep debt of gratitude to the late Dr. Rajendra Prasad who identified himself with this project from the start and through every stage of its progress. He not only provided the needed inspiration and encouragement but had me read out to him the first two parts of this book while he was himself on the sick-bed, which he left only to attend on his ailing wife during her last illness. He was to have followed up his memorable introduction to *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase* with one for this volume but that was not to be. It is with his blessings that this volume is now being presented to the reader.

I must apologise to the reader for some printing errors that have escaped unnoticed in spite of the best care. On page 23, in 5th line from bottom, please read "bone" for "bones"; on page 62, the source of quotation at the end of para three will be found in reference No. 183 on p. 757; on page 66, section 2, in para 1, line 2, "1772" should read "1774"; on page 115, para 1, in line 14, read "43" for "39"; on page 143, in line 2, para 4, "1896" should read "1898"; on page 200, "Jesus's" in line 6, para 1 is a misprint for "Jesus' "; and "2" for "25" in line 4, para 2 on page 207. On page 256, in line 2, para 2, please read, "1889" for "1899" and "1906" for "1907" in line 2, para 1, on page 240. Similarly on p. 260, in line 7, para 2, "1890" is a misprint for "1891"; on p. 375, line 5, please delete "was" before "succeeded"; on page 398, in line 5, para 5, after "one-man one-vote principle" words "coupled with a low property qualification" should be added. On p. 409 read "Moltenoes" for "Moltinoes", wherever it occurs; on page 412, in line 31, para 1, please drop quote marks after "and progress". On page 423, "Osientals" in line 30, should read "Orientals"; and "Steinbank" on page 462, para 3, in line 8, "Stainbank".

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Page 1 Dadabhai Naoroji. "I am . . . inexperienced and young . . . guide me . . . Indians look upon you as children to the father."—Gandhiji.

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Page 3 (Above Left) Raja Ram Mohun Roy : (1774-1833). (Right) Swami Vivekananda : (1863-1902). (Below) Shri Rajchandra. "In spiritual perception he (Gandhiji) placed him even before the Russian Sage (Tolstoy)."

Page 4 Kaba Gandhi. Autograph by Gandhiji in Gujarati : "Respects at his feet of his son Mohandas".

Page 5 The letter of resignation of Kaba Gandhi from Dewanship of Wankaner State dated January 8, 1879: "Compelled by the difficulties of my position . . . (I) submit my resignation with the request that it may be accepted, failing which I shall leave for Rajkot . . ." .

Page 6 (Left) Gandhiji's house at Rajkot: "Above the main gate . . . a small room". (Right) The house at Porbandar: "Living in murky . . . surroundings they developed a physique and character as sturdy and solid as the house they lived in."

Page 7 (Left) Gandhiji at seven: "Cheerful sweet face . . . radiant forehead . . . lovely eyes". (Right) the exact spot, where Gandhiji was born, indicated by the Swastika mark: "Even the lying in bed . . . was used jointly by all".

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Page 8 (Left) Special Power of Attorney for acquiring ancestral home of the Gandhis, dated Poona February 27, 1945. Gandhiji's signature on right; author's attestation as witness on left below the date line. (Right) Deed of sale and transfer for ancestral home of Gandhis in Porbandar (1777) with signature of seven witnesses besides the seal and the Swastika mark of the Rana in lieu of signature.

Page 9 Notification in Kathiawar Political Agency Gazette (September 4, 1873) of appointment of "Krumchund Otumchand" as member of Rajasthanik Court.

Page 10 (Above) Alfred High School: "Barely scraped through with 247½ marks out of total 625 . . . position in the University 404th, 5th in Kattyawar High School". (Below) Gandhiji at fourteen (wearing cap): "I saw that a man of truth must also be a man of care."

Page 11 (Above Left) Gandhiji's sister Raliat: "Moniya was restless as mercury". (Right) Gandhiji's brother Lakshmidas. "Father disapproved of dissection . . . intended you for the bar". (Below) Gandhiji at 17 with Lakshmidas: "Morality is the basis of things and . . . truth . . . the substance of all morality".

Page 12 (Above) Gandhiji at a meeting of Vegetarians in the Isle of Wight, 1890. Bottom row (right to left) : Gandhiji and Dr. Josiah Oldfield. Top row : Henry Salt on extreme left. (Below) Dr. Pranjivan Mehta: "Finding him in flannels he smiled."

Between pages 184 *and* 185

Page 1 Kathiawad: Gandhiji's Home Land.

Pages 2-3 Genealogy of Mahatma Gandhi.

Page 4 Indian National Congress at Calcutta (1890). Sketch by Mr R. W. Allan, the artist, who accompanied Mr W. S. Caine, M.P., published by the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Extra No. 57. Reproduced in *India*, August 28, 1891.

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Batch 2 : *Between pages* 288 *and* 289

Page 1 (Above) Gandhiji's Residence at 52 Bayswater, London, (March 1891). (Below Left) Kasturba. (Right) Entrance to Gandhiji's room: "Happy days of consciousness that we were helping to make the world better".

Page 2 Report of the Vegetarian Conference at Portsmouth, May 5 to May 12, 1891 : "Mohan had every reason to be satisfied with himself".

Page 3 Concluding portion of Gandhiji's interview to *The Vegetarian* at the end of his stay in England from *The Vegetarian* of June 20, 1891 : "I carry one great consolation with me that I shall go back without having taken meat or wine and that I know . . . that there are so many vegetarians in England."

Page 4 Gandhiji's Bar-at-law certificate.

Page 5 Gandhiji's application for enrolment as an Advocate in the Bombay High Court, November 16, 1891.

Page 6 Letter of recommendation by Edwards, Bar-at-Law, Lincoln's Inn, appended to Gandhiji's application for enrolment as an Advocate in the Bombay High Court.

Page 7 Three Western Thinkers. (Above) Count Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) (Left) Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862). (Right) Edward Maitland (1824-1897).

Page 8 The Annual Report of the Esoteric Christian Union for 1899, appreciating Gandhiji's services: "The active spirit . . . in . . . (S. Africa) being a Hindu gentleman who is practising there as a lawyer."

Page 9 Typical reactions of the South African whites to Gandhiji's "Open Letter" scribbled on the covering note to the same (Left), and to his "Appeal to Every Briton in South Africa."

Page 10 Gandhiji's letter to Dadabhai Naoroji: "His letter-head now bore the inscription : M. K. Gandhi, Agent for the Esoteric Christian Union and the London Vegetarian Society."

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Page 11 Gandhiji's letter to Mrs Lewis : "We will not learn truth by means of falsehood."

Page 12 Farewell address to Gandhiji on his departure to India in June, 1896: "Addresses were presented in Hindi, Gujarati and Urdu — none in English."

Between pages 360 *and* 361

Page 1 Africa (Political). Rhodes' plan for "the Suez Canal to the interior", his "Road to the North".

Page 2 South Africa: Distribution of African Tribes.

Page 3 A facsimile of a page from Gandhiji's scrap book: "Mr Gandhi would be an ornament to the House"—*Times of Natal*, dated November 27, 1895.

Page 4 Natal.

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MAHATMA GANDHI—THE EARLY PHASE

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PART ONE
THE GREAT AWAKENING

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CHAPTER I

A PORTENT

1

ANNO DOMINI nineteen hundred and nineteen was well advanced toward summer. A student in a college at Lahore, I was shortly to appear for the Master of Arts degree. One evening a number of students were resting in our hostel after the college hours, when suddenly we heard in the distance shouting by a vast concourse of people followed by reports of repeated firing. Bareheaded and barefooted we rushed out. Minutes later we found ourselves engulfed in a vast crowd — many of them with their clothes dripping with blood — fleeing before mounted police, who, to disperse them, rode indiscriminately among them regardless of loss of limb or life. The people had heard that Mahatma Gandhi had been arrested, and were proceeding in an orderly procession to the residence of Sir Michael O'Dwyer, the Lt. Governor of the Punjab, to lodge a protest. Stopped by the police and ordered to disperse they had refused. The authorities saw red in the emergence of this new temper. What followed was an attempt on their part to stem the tide in the only way they knew. Frightfulness thereafter became more and more the order of the day.

A few days later came the news of the massacre in Amritsar. Brigadier-General Dyer had ordered fire to be opened on a peaceful, unsuspecting crowd of over twenty thousand—men, women and children —trapped in the enclosure known as Jallianwalla Bagh, killing 379 people and wounding nearly three times that number according to the official estimate.

Following this, Martial Law was promulgated in many places in the Punjab, and under its cover unspeakable indignities and humiliations were heaped upon the people. Citizens widely respected were stripped, tied to flogging posts erected in public squares, and flogged for merely technical breaches of the Martial Law. Even children were not spared the lash. All those, who crossed a lane, where an English woman had been assaulted, were forced to crawl on their bellies. Every Indian, whatever his status, was forced to salute every British officer who happened to pass by. Students were made to march in the hot sun sixteen miles daily for roll-call, and salute the Union Jack to instil into their "rebellious minds" a healthy respect for the British flag.

All these events inflicted a deep wound on the spirit of Indian youth. Black despair choked their souls when they found that some of the heads of the educational institutions, whom they looked upon as the

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religious leaders of society, supinely complied with the order of the martial law authorities to penalise a certain percentage of their students irrespective of their guilt. What was that spirituality worth, the youth asked, which could not stand up to the challenge of temporal power and unflinchingly bear witness to justice and truth? Or, was spirituality only a beatitude for the other world with no sanction in the affairs of men?

A tumult raged within me. The annual session of the Indian National Congress was to be held in the Christmas week that year at Amritsar. I decided to attend it. There, as a student-visitor I had my first glimpse of Gandhiji.

The weather at yule-tide in Amritsar can be very wintry. A chill blast was blowing when in the evening I alighted at the railway station. A heavy downpour of rain from an ashen sky had covered the streets with ankle-deep slush. I trudged to the house of a class-mate, where I was to stay. While going upstairs, I was overtaken by a party of national leaders—each one of them a name to conjure with. The group included Swami Shraddhanandji, the saffron-robed Savonarola of Northern India and founder of the Gurukul University at Hardwar, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya—founder and Chancellor of the Banaras Hindu University, popularly known as "the silver-tongued orator of the Congress"—and Gandhiji. To make way for them I hid myself behind a half-closed door-leaf on the staircase landing. There, words fell upon my ears that changed the current of my life.

It had been decided to acquire the Jallianwalla Bagh and turn it into a memorial to the martyrs who had fallen in the massacre. The leaders had come to meet the leading businessmen of the city for the collection of the memorial fund. Malaviyaji appealed to them with his characteristic winsomeness. He invoked *Dharma* (duty), he invoked *Artha* (worldly gain), he invoked *Kama* (happiness). All these would be theirs and *Moksha* (salvation), too, into the bargain, if only they would unloosen their purse-strings. But no money jingled. Shraddhanandji followed. He reminded them of India's glorious past and her lofty ancient cultural tradition, which called upon them to rise to the occasion. But his words of eloquence produced no better results.

Finally, Gandhiji spoke. He neither coaxed, nor cajoled, nor made a perfervid appeal to their emotions. In level tones he told them that the target had been fixed. It had to be reached. If they failed in their duty he would sell his Ashram and make up the amount. He would not let the sanctity of the national resolve, to which he had been a party—so had they been too—be lightly treated. The hard-boiled, hard-headed businessmen at once saw that here was a client of a different order—a man who meant what he said and said what he meant. There was no mistaking his rocklike firmness. A lesson was burnt in upon them indelibly in the sanctity of national resolves. The required amount was subscribed on the spot.

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The Congress session proved to be a momentous one. What I saw there convinced me that we were witnessing the birth of a new epoch. Old values were going into the melting pot; new ones were emerging in their place. India was finding what had lain dormant within her for ages—her soul, and its limitless possibilities. Things in India were never going to be the same again.

With my mind in a ferment I returned to my studies. A couple of weeks later, I sought an interview with Gandhiji. Dusk was falling. The sky was overcast with slate-coloured clouds splashed with a dirty red. A chill wind soughed among the bare branches of the trees overhead. As I stood in the deepening shadow before his temporary residence at Lahore, I heard a discussion going on within. The Martial Law trials were then in full swing and a deputation had come to wait upon him on behalf of a person implicated in one of them. It was considered to be a hopeless case, as there was a murder charge against the accused. How could anyone dare to recommend for amnesty a person accused of political murder? They were in utter despair. Could the Mahatma do anything for their man, they asked?

In answer Gandhiji asked for "full facts of the case and a clear confession if your man is guilty".

Everybody stood aghast. What hope was there in the atmosphere then prevailing for a person who pleaded guilty to a charge of political murder? It would be signing his own death warrant.

A silence followed in which one could have heard even a pin drop. Gandhiji reassuringly continued: "I would not let even the worst murderer go to the gallows. In my Ashram there are several persons who were implicated in cases of political murder. They made a clean breast of it. Converted to non-violence they are today among my most trusted workers."

In his voice there was a calm assurance, and boundless compassion joined to an unearthly detachment that was strangely soothing; a quiet dignity and sense of kingliness, suggestive of an access to some hidden reservoir of power which recked no obstacle, knew no defeat and could find a way, as it were, even through an impenetrable granite wall. I cannot recall the exact words. Words were unnecessary. One *felt* it. It was the deep calling unto the deep. Here was what I had been looking for—a glimpse of the power of the spirit which is its own seal and sanction, which no power on earth can subdue and that never fails. The deliverer had come to call upon a prostrate people to stand up, shed their fears and walk with their heads erect.

The interview that I had sought came a few days later. He had just had his bath and was on the way to midday dinner. Wrapped in a white Kashmir pashmina shawl, he sat bolt upright looking a picture of dignity and repose. There was majesty in his simplicity. The deep mellifluous voice held one spellbound. The eyes reflected an infinity of kindliness, compassion and peace. The body was thin to the

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point of emaciation but the prominent barrel chest gave a sense of tremendous power. The broad, smooth brow showed not a wrinkle. The countenance was radiant, the skin silken smooth and the complexion clear. I told him how a deep dissatisfaction with current values in which I had been brought up had possessed me, how what I saw around me seemed to make no sense, and to find the meaning of life had become to me the question of questions.

He followed every word with an interest and concentration that set me completely at my ease. When I had finished he remarked with a reassuring smile that my experience was by no means peculiar to me. It happened to everybody some time or other in life. There was nothing to worry about. Finally he said, "Come to my Ashram when I reach there. In the peaceful atmosphere of the Ashram you will be able to work out answers to your questions." His words lifted a great weight off my soul. But when I asked him whether I should not discontinue my studies and straightaway proceed to his Ashram since the university, it seemed to me, had nothing to offer that I could not get by my own effort at home, he to my surprise said, "No. You should finish your studies first. It would have been different if you had not undertaken them. It is not wisdom to leave in the middle what one has once taken up."

I accepted his advice. After all there were only six months to the final examination, I said to myself, and in the meantime I could fit myself in various ways for the alluring vista of the new way of life in the Ashram that had opened up. I procured and avidly read all writings by Gandhiji or about him that I could obtain. His *Indian Home Rule* at that time seemed to me to be all wrong, antiquated and antediluvian, till I read Edward Carpenter's *Civilization—Its Cause and Cure*, Ruskin's *Unto This Last* and Henry George's *Social Problems And Their Remedies*, when everything became crystal clear. I also read some of Tolstoy's booklets in a cheap, popular edition issued by the Free Age Press, London. But his doctrine of non-resistance, based on philosophical anarchism, did not then appeal to me, and his indictment of all Government as a banded union of the worst villains in society seemed too sweeping. It was different with the English Romantic poets—Shelley, Coleridge and particularly Wordsworth. Their reflections on Man, Nature and Society and the "eternal Something" that lies behind and beyond Nature, fired my imagination and became to me an inexhaustible well of intellectual and spiritual inspiration. It enabled me later to approach Gandhiji's philosophy with a fresh insight.

As a part of my preparation I began to simplify my life. This was just as well. But I am afraid, I made a thorough nuisance of myself when I began experimenting in dietetics in the light of Gandhiji's *A Guide to Health* to the consternation of my poor mother, who was afraid lest my crazy example might be copied by my younger brother and my little sister.

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I had lost my father—a high judicial officer—when I was in the high school. My mother and my uncle, who became more than a father to me, were looking forward to the time when after completing my studies I would shoulder the family responsibilities. But that was not to be.

In the autumn of 1920 I gave up my studies in response to the call of non-cooperation and joined Gandhiji in his Ashram at Sabarmati. He was out on one of his whirlwind tours when I reached there. On his return I saw him. "You write me a thesis on the theory and practice of non-cooperation," he said to me at the end of our talk. "And mind you, it must be in my hands by 3 p.m. today."

I did as I was bidden. Next day he again set out on his tour and I all but forgot about the incident. A couple of weeks later I received a letter. It was from him—in Hindustani. He had greatly liked my piece, he wrote, and wished to make use of my pen. This was followed by a wire asking me to join him at Delhi during his forthcoming tours. I felt very elated on being told by him, when I presented myself to him at Delhi, that he was sending my contribution to be published in his weekly journal *Young India*. This he did with an appreciative prefatory note.

He was to leave in the afternoon for Rohtak, where he had a meeting. I stayed behind. On his return at evening he enquired why I had not come. "No one had asked me," I replied. Then some one in the party must have been remiss in his duty, he said, but I should have made it my concern to save him from the consequence of his mistake. Shyness or modesty which stood in the way of performing one's duty was an indication of subtle pride which one should guard against.

Thus began a schooling that continued for twenty-eight long years till the curtain was finally rung down on the most amazing drama of our times.

I soon found that the term "Private Secretary" in connection with him was somewhat of a misnomer. He had nothing "private", or "secret" from which the word "secretary" is derived. "Private Secretary", specially in its political association, carries with it a suggestion of glamour and prestige. Secretaryship to powerful political personages in the West is often a stepping-stone to a public career, sometimes in succession to the Chief himself. In his case it was the reverse. One had to turn one's back on name and fame and all the generally coveted glittering prizes of life and dedicate oneself solely to the service of the causes that the master stood for.

He described himself variously—as a farmer and weaver, a spinner, a scavenger, and so on. His secretaries had to be all these. There was no big, no small with him. Every duty was of equal importance and had to be performed with equal readiness, diligence and care. He was an exacting taskmaster. One had to be ready for any emergency at a moment's notice. Difficulty of an assignment or lack of resources was never accepted

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as an excuse for non-performance. "Therein fail not" was the unfailing directive with which every assignment was accompanied.

In a series of immortal 'Ifs', an English poet has depicted his ideal man. He is one who can keep his head "when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you"; who can trust himself even when all men doubt him, but can "make allowance for their doubting too"; who can wait "and not be tired by waiting", or being lied about won't deal in lies, or "being hated give way to hating", and yet not look "too good, nor talk too wise".

If you can dream—and not make dreams your
master;
If you can think—and not make thoughts your
aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on!"

If the poet had had for his pattern the man whom it was my privilege to serve and follow till the end of his days, the picture could not have been truer to life. Calm in the midst of storm, awake when others were lulled into false security, alert to danger when on the surface all seemed fair, descrying from the luminous height of his serenity ways out of the world's mazes, inexpressibly anguished by the sufferings of others but indifferent to his own, by the alchemy of his detachment he transmuted his anguish into a relentless drive for self-denial, self-purification and self-surrender. Never once, during my lifelong association with him did I hear from his lips an uncharitable expression or a harsh judgment about any of his opponents, critics or even maligners. It was not forgiveness but whole-hearted acceptance on his part of their standpoint as *their* truth, which might one day become also *his* truth.

He radiated a strange serenity and peace that seemed to depend on no outward circumstance, but transformed everything around him. Values were transvalued, success and failure lost their meaning and became

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only milestones in the endless quest for truth. One lost in his company all sense of defeat—the means became the end, the end the means.

2

The stay in Delhi lasted only for a few days. He was at that time struggling with his Hindustani, and during the railway journeys the Hindustani self-instructor, *Munshi*, used to be his constant companion. Whenever he could steal a moment, while he was eating, or even in the lavatory, he would return to it.

He had inaugurated a new era. Day in and day out he was scattering broadcast new ideas and modes of thought. Under their impact, old values and norms of conduct were being revolutionised. A deputation of a Hindu organisation once waited on him to request him to preside over a Go-Raksha Parishad (Cow Protection Conference). Their ideology was of the orthodox, militant type. Cow protection to them meant merely to prevent the death of cow the animal at the hands of non-Hindus anyhow, even by coercion. He declined their invitation saying that although he attached great importance to the subject, his notions of "Go-Raksha" were peculiar to himself and differed from theirs. "So long as there is the bone of a single slaughtered cow to be seen anywhere in India or a cow that is skin-and-bone, cow protection is a mere make-believe. My cow protection calls for the acme of Ahimsa—uttermost purity, self-sacrifice, austerity, hard study and penance on our part. I see no place for these in your programme."

Another deputation discussed with him the removal of "untouchability". The Congress had not yet adopted it as an integral part of its programme, and some members of the deputation could not understand its importance in terms of the independence struggle. They thought it would disrupt the united political front. But he was adamant. "You do not know whom you are pitted against. The moment the British find that the game of setting up the Hindus against the Muslims is played out, they will use 'suppressed' classes in pursuance of their policy of 'divide and rule' ". His warning came true when later separate franchise for the Harijans became the question of questions and threatened to introduce still another insurmountable obstacle in the way of the realisation of our national aspiration.

Still another group asked him what could a physically weak man do in terms of non-violence to protect the honour of a sister who was threatened by a ruffian. In reply he said: "What does a black ant do when you try to pull it away from a piece of nourishment, which it is carrying to feed its young? It is cloven in two but does not let go its hold. Surely a man can do at least as much for the honour of his sister!" He uttered this with a passion that shamed into silence any dialectical sparring.

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His energy was phenomenal. His iron will made every faculty of his body and mind obey its least command as an expert horseman does the animal under him. He could go on working day after day and week after week with only three or four hours of sleep—sometimes without any sleep at all. He had a passion for precision and thoroughness in the minutest details, a meticulous regard for cleanliness and neatness, and impatience of slovenliness in any shape or form—in thinking, writing, dress or daily life. He enforced military discipline and clock-work regularity in his own case and expected the same from those around him. He insisted on doing everything, so far as possible, for himself. If he wanted a paper to be looked up or his spittoon to be brought to him, he went for it himself instead of ordering anyone; he even mended his own clothes. He preferred writing to dictating. One day I actually counted 56 letters which he had written in his own hand. Each one of these he re-read carefully from the dateline to the final detail of the address before handing them for despatch. At the end of it he was so exhausted that pressing his throbbing temples between his two hands, he slumped on the floor just where he was sitting, without even spreading the bedding against which he was leaning. He simply pushed it aside.

He wrote with a steel nib from a country-made glass inkstand, costing half an anna, and used a red-coloured piece of Khadi as satchel for keeping his files and papers. His diet consisted of goat's milk, raisins and fruit and was weighed out and measured with a druggist's exactness and care. I once surreptitiously increased one by one the number of raisins from nineteen to twenty-three. He detected it and gave a discourse on the danger of "blind affection", which I shall always treasure. The menu for each meal was adjusted carefully according to how the system had responded to the previous meal, the amount of sleep he had or expected to have, and the physical and mental strain already undergone or in prospect. He was very fastidious in the selection of fruit. When asked about it, he would say with a smile that we should not forget that his constitution had been built up on South African fruit. He liked his drink to be served to him scalding hot, and always stirred it with a spoon first to bring to the surface any speck of foreign matter that might be lying at the bottom.

He insisted on his desk being kept always clear and woe to anyone of his staff who referred to him a letter more than forty-eight hours old. Finesse or the dialectician's tricks in replies were severely deprecated. The answers had to be straight, clear and to the point. "They must squarely meet the correspondent's difficulty," he would insist. But in case of disputatious correspondents, who wrote to lay traps, he appreciated a clever, diplomatic reply or even a neat retort, provided it was free from sting. Any reply of more than five or ten lines was as a rule consigned to the waste paper basket. The address was no less minutely scrutinised. Not to know, or not to be able to find with the

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help of Bradshaw and Posts & Telegraphs Guide the exact location of an out of the way place in India was regarded as a culpable failure. Vagueness about train timings or the exact time it took for the post to reach its destination by a particular route was another cardinal sin. Deciphering bad handwritings provided a test in patience, perseverance and resourcefulness. When the name of the place in an address baffled all efforts at decipherment, he recommended that the illegible words should be imitated as closely as possible. On another occasion, he suggested that the name and address, which could not be deciphered, should be cut from the original letter and pasted on to the reply cover, adding with a merry twinkle in the eye: "The postal people over there will be able to make it out better than we!"

A most sensitive aesthete, he carried his asceticism lightly and with such perfect grace that it never became a source of embarrassment to others. For instance, he deprecated the tea and coffee habit as being incompatible with the simple life. But knowing that some members of his entourage had that habit he once during a railway journey actually got out of his compartment and fetched a tray of tea from the railway stall for his sleeping companions!

He had the remarkable faculty of switching on and off his mind to and from anything at will and to remain unaffected by his surroundings. Physical inconvenience or the noise and bustle of the crowds seemed to make no difference to him. He could go off to sleep whenever he wished and by himself wake up after a specified number of minutes. Sometimes while dictating he would doze off in the middle of a sentence, have a few winks of sleep and then resume dictating just where he had left off, without any apparent effort or without asking, "Where was I?" or "What was I saying?"

His mental alertness and vigilance in the midst of a welter of activities was always a marvel. During a journey, a Muslim national leader was travelling with us. Everybody in the compartment was fast asleep. Suddenly in the middle of the night he woke me up and asked what the next halt was. "Gujrat," I replied. "Remember to wake Dr. . . ., when the train halts," he said to me. "He is in the next compartment. He has to get down at Gujranwala. He might go beyond his destination if nobody wakes him up in time." He again woke up soon after the train had passed Gujrat and made sure that his instructions had been duly carried out.

It was during this journey that the news about the tragedy at Nankana Saheb was received, which necessitated a visit to the site of that grim happening. Nankana Saheb is a famous Sikh shrine in the Punjab. A movement was afoot in the nineteen twenties in the Punjab for the purification of the administration of Sikh shrines. The corrupt *Mahant* (abbot) of Nankana Saheb Gurdwara had brutally done to death a number of Sikh reformers for no fault other than their zeal for

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reform. In the course of his speech at Nankana Saheb, Gandhiji laid down a dictum which has since become classic in the strategy of non-violence, namely, "It is not enough to eschew the use of force; show of force, too, must be avoided." Anything that makes the opponent feel nervous is provocative of violence and is, therefore, itself a species of violence.

He had a wonderfully organised mind. At Lahore, just as he was leaving for the railway station, he was asked by an English daily to give a statement to the press on the Nankana Saheb tragedy.

"Can your representative accompany me as far as . . .," he asked.

"Yes, but it is only a 40 minute run from here."

"That will be enough for me."

And as sure as anything, five minutes before the train reached there he had dashed out at white heat an open letter addressed to "Khalsaji", which he handed to the astounded press representative, duly finished and revised—a classic of its kind. He attributed his mastery over the mind to the observance of Brahmacharya or self-control. "Ordinarily our thoughts jostle chaotically in our mind. The discipline of Brahmacharya enables us to order them and to exclude at will every thought, impulse or feeling that is not relevant to the thinking in hand. If we could do that always we would not know what fatigue is. It is not the work that kills, but the chaos. The friction of ideas in the mind causes the wear and tear."

He had not yet resumed third class railway travelling—his state of health did not permit it after his recent illness. Nor did I ever see him at that time sit down to say his morning or evening prayers individually or with the rest, while out of the Ashram. That came later after his release from Yeravda prison in 1924.

Another little incident that happened during this tour left an indelible impression on my mind. At Lahore he was putting up with Lala Lajpat Rai, the undisputed national leader of the Punjab. The lion of the Punjab had not yet accepted in full the non-cooperation programme. Some Punjab leaders came to see Gandhiji and offered to take independent action in pursuance of the non-cooperation programme. But Gandhiji discountenanced the proposed move. The Punjab was Lalaji's province. He would not encourage or be party to any indiscipline in Lalaji's camp, he said. It would be disloyalty to a colleague and of that he had never been guilty. In the Punjab he would act only with and through Lalaji. They must follow Lalaji's advice when and if it differed from his own. Lalaji was not present in the room when the conversation took place. But he overheard it from the adjoining room and was so deeply moved by it that it laid the foundation of an indissoluble and lifelong friendship between the two.

At the end of the tour we returned to the Ashram at Sabarmati. To all appearances it was a dull, drab place, where people engaged

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from dawn to dusk in dull, commonplace chores, and toiled like day-labourers amid what would be regarded as a primitive standard of amenities, till one came to the hard core of the Ashram disciplines on which all his activities were based and from which they derived their meaning. They were truth in thought, word and deed, non-violence, non-possession and non-stealing, chastity and its concomitant, control of the palate, Swadeshi or the principle of regional loyalty, self-sufficiency and self-reliance, and fearlessness—the foundation and the end-result of all these observances.

There were in the Ashram several seasoned women Satyagrahis, who, equipped with nothing more than the training in the Ashram basic disciplines, had made history in South Africa, and a group of children, whom Gandhiji had put through their initiation by making them run the gauntlet of the Martial Law in South Africa as couriers, messengers and errand boys, when they were just on the threshold of their teens.

Not all those, who were drawn to the Ashram, could see the inner meaning of the Ashram way of life. Many a youth who had come there full of enthusiasm, I was told, had turned back disappointed because, as one of them put it, there was "not a trace of political commotion" there!

In the gloaming after the prayer one day, explaining the importance of the Ashram disciplines and the role that he envisaged for the Ashram in the national struggle for freedom, Gandhiji remarked that he looked forward to the day when he would call out all the inmates of the Ashram, who had been trained in those disciplines, to immolate themselves at the altar of non-violence. Unmoved, he would watch them fall one after another before a shower of bullets, without a trace of fear or hatred but only love in their hearts. And then, when the last one of them had fallen, he would himself follow. It would be a red-letter day in the Ashram history, he said, when the Ashram trees would be the only witnesses left to bear testimony to that supreme sacrifice. Then only would they have proved themselves worthy of the Ashram and the Ashram worthy of its name and of India.

In the evening, accompanied by some of us from the Ashram, he used to go out for a stroll, which usually ended at the gate of the Sabarmati Central Prison. Pointing to it one day, he remarked with a laugh, "This is our other Ashram." He afterwards explained: "In our Ashram there are no walls. The only walls we have are those of various Ashram disciplines. But, unlike the prison walls, they are intended not to cramp but to protect and give us greater freedom. It is only when we observe spiritual disciplines voluntarily that we experience real freedom. Armed with them, we can go anywhere, face any emergency and never feel baffled. For instance, our life in the Ashram is expected to be harder than prison life. We have no possessions of which anyone can deprive us. Imprisoned, we shall miss no delights of the palate or

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any other physical indulgence, having accustomed ourselves to plain, fare and simple life. We shall fear no one because we shall have learnt to walk in the fear of God, and we shall gladly die bearing witness to the truth that freedom is our birth-right. We shall never repudiate it. And since in prison a civil resister voluntarily observes the prison discipline and welcomes the hardships incidental to jail life as a part of suffering for truth, we shall feel happy and free like a bird even behind the prison walls. We shall never weary of jail-going. When the whole of India has learnt this lesson, India shall be free. For, if the alien power then turns the whole of India into a vast prison, it will not be able to imprison her soul."

The distance that separated the two "Ashrams" was hardly ten furlongs. But it took us as many years to get there and for the two to interchange their respective roles. In 1930, His Majesty's prisons became Ashrams to the Indian nationalists, and the whole country a vast prison. Quickened by Gandhiji's teaching, the masses of India rose in a non-violent revolt against the alien rule. The alternative to treating with them was to enforce the peace of the grave. This the conscience of the civilised world was not prepared at that juncture to tolerate and even the British power shrank from it. It was driven instead to have recourse to subtler methods which, however, did not avail it for long.

3

In the year 1930, when the Salt Satyagraha was in full swing, Will Durant, the celebrated American philosopher, author of that monumental study *The Story of Civilization*, came to India to visualise a people whose culture he had been studying, "to look with my own eyes upon certain works of art, and then to return to my historical studies forgetting this contemporary world."[1]

He was not particularly prepossessed in India's favour, he says, and he did not expect that he should be "swept into a passionate interest in Indian politics." But the spectacle he saw on coming to India, of "a people—one-fifth of the human race—suffering poverty and oppression bitterer than any to be found elsewhere on the earth", horrified him, and abandoning his original plan, he returned home, resolved to study "living India as well as the India with the brilliant past; to learn more of this unique Revolution that fought with suffering accepted but never returned; to read the Gandhi of today as well as the Buddha of long ago."[2]

And the more he read, the more his astonishment and humiliation grew. He began to feel that he had come upon "the greatest crime in all history". With unaccustomed passion he exclaimed: "One must . . . take sides before the fight is over".[3] "Anyone: who sees this crime and does not speak out, is a coward. Any Englishman or any

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American, seeing it and not revolted by it, does not deserve his country or his name."

The First Indian Round Table Conference had then just opened in London with the leaders of the Indian freedom struggle still in prison. What would the British do, everybody wondered. They had the power. They did not need to be just. The Conference failed. The Tory Secretary of State for India, Sir Samuel Hoare, quipped, "The dogs bark, the caravan moves on." The steam-roller of repression was turned on full throttle once more. The authorities thought they had squelched the movement and could now well rest on their arms. In their secret official despatches, they even described its leader as a "spent force".

The British power was reluctant to let go its hold on India. India had made England rich. It was the wealth of India that had enabled England to maintain a standard of life that was "markedly higher" than in other countries. The Indian Civil Service attracted young men of talent "from good families but without considerable worldly-goods", and assured to every one who showed any merit, "a very handsome salary while he was still young and a more than adequate pension at the end of his service."[4] There were some 7500 retired British officials in Great Britain drawing annually £ 3,500,000 to £ 4,000,000 in pension from the Indian revenue.[5]

India was the "central barracks of the Empire". The army in India provided a mobile reserve behind foreign policy. It was the Indian troops sent out at India's expense that had, in the Boer War in 1899, in the Boxer Rising in 1900, and in World War One, helped to avert a disaster to British arms respectively in South Africa and China and German East Africa, Palestine, Mesopotamia and France.

Again, India provided the ideal training ground for budding imperialists. It was here that they were initiated into the mysteries of imperial diplomacy. In the words of Wilhelm Dibelius, they learnt "how to deal with jealousies between nations, States and social classes", and to exploit "religious prejudices and religious fanaticism" that made them past masters in the game of "*Divide et Impera*". To safeguard the sea-route to India the Cape had been occupied and Egypt taken over. In World War One, bridges were erected between it and the Mediterranean in Persia, Palestine and Mesopotamia.[6] Britain could not afford to let go her hold on "the brightest jewel in the imperial crown". Thundered the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, with disaster staring England in the face during World War Two, that he had not become His Majesty the King's First Minister "to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire".

But the play was not over; the end was not yet. On August 15, 1947, the Union Jack, that had for well-nigh two centuries flown over India as the symbol of British power, was finally hauled down, and the tricolour of independent India hoisted in its place over the

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dome of the Government House in New Delhi. There were scenes of unprecedented national rejoicing. As the clock chimed the midnight hour, conchs were blown and a thunderous applause went up to greet the birth of independence. There was dancing and singing. Joyous crowds rent the sky repeatedly with deafening roars of "*Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai*" to pay homage to the Father of the Nation, who had led them from bondage to deliverance.

But in the midst of these rejoicings the Father of the Nation was nowhere to be seen with the hero's laurels adorning his brow. The sceptre of power had no attraction for him. Entrusting it to others whom he had trained up for that role, he had gone to live in a dingy, dilapidated building in a semi-deserted quarter in the capital of Bengal. The minority community needed his presence there. They were afraid they would be engulfed in an orgy of communal violence after the withdrawal of British power. He had pledged their safety with his life. He redeemed his pledge by a miracle of soul force that surpassed all his previous miracles, till it was in turn surpassed by the miracle of his last fast in Delhi. Lord Mountbatten, the Governor-General of the Indian Union, a veteran commando of no mean repute, hailed him as "our one-man boundary force", who had, by his presence in Calcutta, controlled the communal rioting, whereas fifty-five thousand soldiers stationed in the Punjab had been unable to prevent rioting there.

A few months later, while going as usual to his evening prayer gathering, he fell to an assassin's bullet with forgiveness and prayer for his assailant in his heart and the name of God on his lips. This was his "one perfect act" of Ahimsa about which he had often said that, if and when it came, it would release a power whose impact would be felt throughout the world. The Security Council of the United Nations suspended its proceedings in homage. The United Nations flag flew at half-mast. Nations vied with one another in paying him tributes such as have seldom been paid to any mortal in recorded history. Its reverberations are today heard in many lands and are likely increasingly to be so heard down the centuries.

4

Wars of independence are generally associated with an aftermath of bitterness—hatred and revenge, indemnities and reparations, victimisation and reprisals, hanging of traitors and Nuremberg trials of "collaborators" and "war criminals". But the conclusion of India's freedom struggle saw instead the erstwhile antagonists forget old scores and join hands together in amity and friendship, to work for the advancement of their common ideals.

The transfer of power from the British into Indian hands was an event unique in history. A British peer in Parliament described the

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Independence of India Bill as "a treaty of peace without a war". More, it was a revolution by consent, a victory without the sting of defeat, a conquest that was loved as well by the conquered as by those who had achieved the conquest. Each side claimed it as a triumph and fulfilment of its own ideals.

Hardly had a decade closed upon the ending of British rule in India when a noble Lord was proposing that Mahatma, the ex-rebel, and avowed arch-opponent of the British Empire, who had fought them for over a quarter of a century, be adopted as England's Patron Saint.

In Coleridge's famous ballad, the Albatross shot dead by the Ancient Mariner hangs like a dead-weight round his neck—a curse and a retribution. In the case of England an ancient land, with a rich heritage of civilisation and a tradition of spiritual attainment unmatched in the world before or since, hung like the fabled dead bird round its imperialist ruler's neck. Unless the Albatross came back to life, the curse could not be lifted or the guilty one redeemed. This, in the Ancient Mariner comes through the power of spontaneous prayer gushing from a repentant heart. But corporations and systems are said to be soulless —beyond the reach of personal touch or the operation of the moral laws. And in a sense this is true.

Nevertheless, the Albatross came back to life. The miracle was made possible by the advent upon the scene of a man who showed how the redemptive way may be applied to national and international problems—not only to moral man, but also to what has perhaps loosely been termed "immoral society".

Herein lies the significance of Gandhiji's unique contribution to human progress. He showed that we do not need to destroy the opponent or weaken his power in order to win the battle of right against wrong. We can transform and annex it by the alchemy of vicarious suffering—Ahimsa or non-violence. He gave it the name Satyagraha—"soul-force" or "truth-force"; the power that accrues from a conscious realisation of one's identity with the whole creation and therethrough with the Supernal Reality, which is Truth or God, and which expresses itself in human relationships as love. It makes no difference by what name we call Him, or even whether we recognise His existence or not. Since He is Himself both the Law-giver and the Law, to deny His existence no more affects the operation of His law than ignoring the law of gravitation can prevent an apple from falling.

* * *

The problem of ends and means—the nature of ideals and the methods employed for their realisation, has from the beginning of time baffled idealists, philosophers and men of action alike. Confronted by the choice between acquiescence in evil and compromise with

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wrong means to attain just ends, we cry out with the poet, torn between doubt and despair:

> "Is there no life but these alone,
> Madman or slave must man be one?"

Ineffectiveness of right in the face of immoral might on the one hand, and the self-defeating nature of tainted means to attain pure ends on the other, creates a situation in human affairs to which often there seems to be no key. The Mahatma showed how goodness can be made effective, patience dynamic, sincerity highest diplomacy and Ahimsa the mightiest force. Purity of means for the attainment of worthy ends, he again and again demonstrated, was the condition not only of spiritual progress but of success also on the mundane plane. Thereby he removed one element of tragedy in the world of the modern man that very often turns it into "a vale of tears".

Spanning a whole era and three continents, the life-story of Mahatma Gandhi has an astonishingly futuristic and global aspect. The face of the world has changed since he was born. An empire, bigger and mightier than the Roman Empire, rose to the zenith of its power under his eyes, passed through the empire-building stage and then got busy to divest itself of its possessions. He challenged the might of that empire, armed with no other weapon than soul-force, and that empire, after having humbled the military prowess of its antagonists in two World Wars, felt compelled to come to terms with the weaponless warrior and even to take pride in so doing. The malady of race prejudice which he unerringly spotted and upon which he, yet unknown to fame, declared war in a strange, distant land is today engaging the attention of the world as a potential threat to civilisation. The revolt of colour against White domination, touched off by his example, is making history in more lands than one, and bids fair to hold the world's stage for our generation, probably even for the next. The dropping of the atom bombs on Japan two and a half years before his death ushered in the atomic age and with it the possibility as never before of the destruction of mankind and even of the planet we inhabit. It has set thinking minds desperately in search of a power that would control power, and provide a mode of defence against aggression in the nuclear age that would fit in with the strategy of survival for humanity and the values for which humanity stands. The awareness, which he has kindled, of the existence of an essence residing even in the humblest and frailest of beings, that can be evoked, harnessed and put to use by the common man in the mass, and against which the force of arms cannot prevail, has infused a fresh hope in the hearts of the suppressed millions in their unequal struggle against the tyranny of entrenched privilege, race-prejudice and armed might. It is possible to read in the emergence of this phenomenon, history's answer to the deadly threat to

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human liberty that has developed as a result of science arming with a terrific concentration of power, the few against the many. A few hours before his death, the Mahatma reaffirmed his faith that the weapon of non-violence alone could provide an answer to the challenge of the atom bomb.

The story of the discovery, development and progressive application of this power in the world of violence is the story of the life and career of its discoverer and his struggles.

5

Mahatma Gandhi has been interpreted variously by different people, by each according to his own personal bias and reading of history. Some have dubbed him as an astute politician in the guise of a saint, who used the mask of religion to further his political ends. Others have pictured him as a "medieval saint". Still others have described him as a bungler who queered the pitch of Indian politics by injecting religion into it. The view has been advanced that his dabbling in politics actually delayed the advent of Indian freedom, which would have come in any case and perhaps earlier if he had not launched his "religio-political" non-cooperation campaign. In that event, it has been further maintained, a host of problems including India's partition, which beleaguer us today, would have been avoided. Where lies the truth? Was he a "silly old twirp"? Or was he a "freak" and an "accident" that could happen only in India and nowhere else in the world? Was he the "Grey Eminence" of Mr. Amery, the Secretary of State for India?

There are always at least half a dozen interpretations possible of every event, Sherlock Holmes used to say. All of them may be perfectly logical and consistent. But only one of them is correct, and it is the one which fits in with all the facts of the case. A small fragment of an arc, regarded by itself, may look like a part of a parabola, a hyperbola, a circle or an ellipse. It is only when it makes sense with the whole, that the correct answer is found. It is the same with individuals.

The remedy is determined by the case-history of the patient and the aetiology of the disease. To assess the life-work of the Mahatma, one has to have a detailed understanding of India's ailments, their nature and origin. How was it that a country so rich in natural resources and high moral, religious and cultural traditions as India, was reduced to abject poverty and prostration? How was it that a nation of three hundred millions, known for the valour of its martial races, was overthrown and held in bondage for two centuries by a handful of people from across the seas; and this precisely when they were showing such "languid incompetence" in the American War? England was never a military State. Did the British walk into an empire in a "fit of

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absent-mindedness", as has sometimes been maintained? Or were their conquests due to some "incommunicable physical or moral superiority"? It is only when we have found an answer to these questions that we shall be able to understand the meaning of what Gandhiji did, why he did it, and why nothing else would have answered in its place.

"We have learnt from many instances in European history," observes Prof. J. R. Seeley in his *Expansion of England*, "to think it almost impossible really to conquer an intelligent people wholly alien in language and religion from its invaders. The whole power of Spain could not in eighty years conquer the Dutch provinces with their petty population. The Swiss could not be conquered in old time, nor the Greeks the other day."[7] But in the case of England, just when three millions of their own race in America had thrown off their allegiance to the English Crown, when it looked as if the days of her greatness were over and her decline had begun, the English appeared as "irresistible conquerors" in India. This at first glance seems to present a contradiction. But the contradiction resolves itself when we look critically beneath the surface of what has so long passed as history.

It is wholly incorrect, Prof. Seeley goes on to observe, "to speak of the English nation as having conquered the nations of India. The nations of India have been conquered by an army of which on the average about a fifth part was English. . . .India can (therefore) hardly be said to have been conquered at all by foreigners; she has rather conquered herself. . .we should rather have to say that she elected to put an end to anarchy by submitting to a single Government, even though that Government was in the hands of foreigners."[8]

This answers the question why Indian Independence came the way it did, and whether it would not have come earlier if a different path had been pursued. Her deliverance, in the ultimate analysis, depended upon her refusal to be party to her own subjection and her capacity, even though unarmed, to cope with the threat of anarchy without British help. Non-cooperation taught her the secret of the first, reliance on the weapon of non-violence gave her the courage to tell the British power to "quit India", leaving her, as the Mahatma put it, "to anarchy or to God".

Again, it has often been said that the weapon of non-violence can be employed only against an opponent with a conscience. It was successful in the case of India because India's fight was against the English, who are a highly cultured, freedom-loving, and God-fearing people. Had it been practised against a ruthless opponent, like Hitler, for instance, it and its author both would have been snuffed out at the very outset. This raises the issue whether the British were any the less ruthless than Hitler when they felt that the maintenance of their power called for ruthlessness on their part. A further question is whether the blunting of the edge of British ruthlessness also was not due to the practice of

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non-violence—whether conscious or unconscious—by India. All this calls for delving deep into the facts of history.

Finally, the question must be answered: What made the Mahatma the "soul of India" and a symbol of her aspirations? What enabled him to evoke such phenomenal response in the hearts of the millions of his countrymen? What was the universality of his appeal due to?

Great teachers, it has been said, do not hand over their teachings, but only raise into consciousness ideas and tendencies which are embedded in the people's minds. What were then, and whence came the basic concepts that had so long lain buried in India's consciousness and which Gandhiji quickened into life by his magic touch? The answer lies in India's ancient spiritual tradition that had entered into the blood and bones of the Indian masses and of which he became a living embodiment. More immediately it lies in the "century of wrong" that preceded India's struggle for freedom and from which that struggle derived not only its meaning but also its character.

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CHAPTER II

A CENTURY OF WRONG

1

TESTIMONY OF the most unimpeachable character has been forthcoming in superabundance at Harappa and Mahenjodaro that civilisation has thriven in India from times immemorial. By the third and fourth millenium, B.C., it had already put our forbears in the forefront of the cultured people of the world. Explorations by archaeologists have uncovered in a fine state of preservation "great cities and industries, comfortable homes and luxuries ranging from bathrooms to statuary and jewelry."[1] Even at this early period, she had an elaborate drainage system, betokening a social condition "superior to that prevailing in contemporary Babylonia and Egypt."[2]

From the days of the Buddha in the sixth century, B.C., through the times when Ashoka the Compassionate, having defeated his adversary on the battlefield, renounced for ever the use of military force for the extension of his territories, down to the sixteenth century, India had kept well abreast—when not actually ahead—of the West in crafts, commerce, industry and agriculture, education and civil government, religion, philosophy and many branches of science and learning. Before the days of the first Elizabeth when England was only a "tiny little island kingdom", Vijayanagar with its legendary wealth and culture and art flourished in South India, and under Akbar, Fatehpur Sikri and Agra dazzled the traveller from afar.

Politically weak, she was economically still prosperous when the Europeans established their power in the eighteenth century. Dynasties rose and fell, kingdoms toppled over and wave after wave of foreign invasion poured through the North-West, leaving a trail of smoke and blood. But through all these vicissitudes of revolution and political change, the "indestructible nation" maintained its even tenor of life and continuity of social and cultural tradition in her numerous self-governing village communities. These "little republics", as Sir Charles Metcalfe called them, "having nearly everything that they want within themselves, and almost independent of any foreign relations"[3], survived when everything else around them seemed to crumble. India's villages, before they fell upon evil times, were busy hives of industry, where flourished numerous indigenous arts and crafts that had made her name famous throughout the world. Nature's bounty,

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aided by the traditional skill and patient industry of her peasantry, made her an abode of plenty. India became a land of fabulous riches, and it was the fame of her wealth that fired first the imagination and then the greed of European adventurers, and brought them to her shores.

During the sixteenth century, the Portuguese enjoyed the monopoly of trade with the East, a monopoly granted to them by the Bull of Pope Alexander VI, in 1493, when an imaginary line was drawn "370 leagues west and south of the Cape Verde Islands", all undiscovered countries to the East of that line being assigned to Portugal, and all lands on the West to Spain.

For a century, Portugal held the "gorgeous East in fee". The trading methods of the Portuguese sea captains had, in the words of historian P. E. Roberts, "more than a flavour of piracy". Portuguese treatment of the "natives" often showed, observes Roberts, "a cruelty lower than the standards of a cruel age".

The Dutch and the English, coming next, broke the monopoly of the Portuguese. The East India Companies of the two nations were founded within a few years of each other. On the last day of the year 1600 the East India Company of the latter, with 217 subscribers, was incorporated in London by name of "the Governor and Company of Merchants of London trading into the East Indies". The French established factories at Surat, Masaulipatam, Pondicherry and Chandernagore between the years 1668-92. A scramble for power followed from which the English emerged as victors, and by the middle of the eighteenth century attained an unchallengeable supremacy over all their European rivals.

Politically disorganised and militarily weak, India was passing through a phase of social decay, in the period following upon the disintegration of the Moghul Empire. She was torn by internecine strife. Her rulers, with their antiquated armies and equipment, and still more antiquated outlook, proved no match for the foreigner who came "armed with the latest European artillery and morals."[4] And so a country with an ancient culture and civilisation went under before the onslaught of an invader who was culturally and in several other respects inferior.

2

At the turn of this century, a brilliant young attorney, yet unknown to fame outside his own country, coined an expression that has since become world famous—"A Century of Wrong". It was the title of a brochure that Jan Christiaan Smuts wrote on the eve of the Boer War in South Africa to describe the series of wrongs that his people had suffered at the hands of the British, beginning with the first

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occupation of the Cape by Britain in 1795 and culminating in the Jameson Raid that led to the Boer War.

In the case of India, her "Century of Wrong" began with the battle of Plassey, when Clive defeated Bengal forces with the loss of only 22 British killed, making the John Company virtual rulers of "the richest province of India". Following upon it a flotilla of more than three hundred boats in a single shipment carried down the river, "flags flying and music playing"[5] a treasure of eight hundred thousand pound sterling, in coined silver from Murshidabad to Fort William. " 'A world of guns' were fired, the Ladies all got 'footsore with dancing' ".[6] Clive received as his share of booty, £ 234,000; altogether the Company and private persons netting three million sterling.[7]

Three years later Clive returned home "perhaps the King's wealthiest subject".[8] He purchased two hundred £ 500 shares of the Company, which he used to set up in the Parliament a caucus of his nominees, who were to vote as he bade; entered the House of Commons, and engaged in "the tremendous corruption of men's consciences" which became a bye-word even in an age known for its sordid politics. Impeached before the Parliament, he defended himself with an air of righteous indignation. "When I think of *the marvellous riches* of that country," he said, "and the comparatively small part which I took away, I am astonished at my own moderation."[9]

Clive's successors, following the pattern that he had set, conspired and intrigued, resorted to forgery to gain their ends and were ennobled, while they hanged others for forging documents. They forcibly imposed treaties, then broke them, and deposed and set up rulers as suited their purpose, using every such occasion for the proverbial shaking of the "Pagoda tree of the East". In less than a decade following the battle of Plassey they had thrice made and unmade Nawabs. Engineering a revolution became "the most paying game in the world".[10] The Company's servants living in Bengal alone received during this period £ 2,169,665 as "presents" from rulers dependent on their guns and favours, in addition to Clive's *jagir* of £ 32,000. Further sums claimed and obtained as 'restitution' within this period amounted to £ 3,770,883. "The English in Bengal," wrote the Directors in their general letter, in 1765, "have been guilty of violating treaties, of great oppression and a combination to enrich themselves. . . .An unbounded thirst after riches seems to have possessed the whole body of our servants to a degree that they have lost all sight of justice to the Country Government, and of their duty to the Committee."[11]

Regarding in retrospect the conduct of the Company's servants upon this occasion, James Mill wrote in his *History of British India* that it "furnishes one of the most remarkable instances upon record of the power of interest to extinguish all sense of justice, and even of shame."[12]

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Thus began the rape of a sub-continent by a trading company "utterly without scruple or principle . . . and greedy of gain". In the words of two British historians of India, G. T. Garratt and Edward Thompson, "A gold-lust unequalled since the hysteria that took hold of the Spaniards of Cortes' and Pizarro's age filled the English mind."[13] "Birds of prey and passage", Burke called them. The company's servants individually and corporately engaged in private inland trade, profiteered and exploited without end, forcibly took away goods and commodities from people for "a fourth part of their value"[14], and obliged them "to give five rupees for goods which are (were) worth but one rupee".[15] They refused to pay the tolls that everybody else was obliged to pay, though that concession belonged to the Company only; and amassed vast fortunes. Back home with their millions, they set themselves up as "Nabobs of the East", married into the peerage and were themselves ennobled. "Only a shade less cruel than their prototypes of Peru and Mexico," wrote Herbert Spencer, "imagine how black must have been their deeds when even the Directors of the Company admitted that the vast fortunes acquired in the inland trade had been obtained by a scene of the most tyrannical and oppressive conduct that was known in any age or country. Conceive the atrocious state of society described by Vansittart who tells us that the English compelled the natives to buy or sell at just what rates they pleased on pain of flogging or confinement."[16]

The Company paid such fabulous dividends that its stock rose to £6,400 per share. Jobbery became rampant. "Everybody and everything was on sale."[17] "Directors and Directors' relatives, peers, even the Royal Family saw no reason why they should not push a young friend or dependent into a service which within an incredibly brief period would bring him back enormously enriched." In the words of Edward Thompson, "English politics and morals became corrupted. English ideas of India became vulgarised, to an extent and permanency which we do not yet realise."[18]

India was supposed to be a land of such inexhaustible and "presumably natural abundance flowering out of the soil"[19] that the Directors stopped sending out money for their investment and expected their representatives in India, after meeting the expenses of all the three presidencies, to finance the Company's entire investment for China and Europe out of the revenue surpluses provided by Bengal. The Company were merchants as well as the sovereigns of the country. "In the former capacity they engross its trade, whilst in the latter they appropriate the revenues."[20] Shiploads of commodities were purchased out of the taxes paid by the people. These were taken away without bringing India any commercial return. One million to twelve hundred thousand sterling, representing one-third of the net revenues of Bengal, was in this way annually drained out of the country. The Company netted a

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profit of one and a half million sterling,[21] and the British Treasury realised £400,000 annually from the Company[22]—all without expenditure of a single shilling. The total drain came to nearly 3 million sterling. This, as Montgomery Martin pointed out in 1838, "amounted in thirty years, at 12 per cent. (the usual Indian rate) compound interest to the enormous sum of £723,997,917 sterling; or, at a low rate as £2,000,000 for fifty years to £8,400,000,000 sterling."[23]

3

The process of conquest and expansion of British territory reached its peak in the regimes of Lord Wellesley and Lord Dalhousie. The former introduced the system of subsidiary alliances by which Indian rulers were obliged to maintain within their territories and at their expense a British force, even if this necessitated curtailing their own forces, and to receive at their courts Residents, whose duty it was to keep their policies on satisfactory lines. To quote Dibelius:

> In the name of order, the Resident would support the power of the Great Mogul against the lesser feudal chiefs; in the name of liberty, the power of the lesser magnate against the greater. He would discover a bloody tyranny here, that must be overthrown; a little group of people there being oppressed by some one or other. . . .Circumstances varied, but the person to be trusted and protected always happened also to be a friend to England.[24]

The subsidy demanded of the Indian rulers was often "oppressive, and totally out of all proportion to their revenues", and in the subsidiary armies "the scale of pay was lavish, and the cost of quarters and equipage high."[25] When the rulers objected or failed to pay, their territories were annexed. Everything was of course done by the victim's "free will", so that "his after-wrigglings were arrant treason and 'Oriental duplicity'."[26] The paramount Power never condescended to "anything so essentially base as argument".[27] The conduct in question of the victim was always "unjustifiable", objections were "calumnies", and of course "unfounded". If the injured party submitted, wrote James Mill, his consent was alleged. If he complained, he was treated as "impeaching the honour and justice of the superior, a crime of so prodigious a magnitude as to set the superior above all obligations to such a worthless connection."[28]

Having persuaded himself that no greater "blessing" could be conferred on the "native" inhabitants of India "than the extension of British authority, influence and power", Lord Dalhousie treated the Indian rulers consistently "as if they were blocks of unfeeling wood, queerly warped into wickedness".[29] His annexations were instances, pure and simple, of "bullying exercise of overwhelming strength." That this spelt, as one of his biographers has pointed out, "the sacrifice

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of independence, of national character, and of whatever renders people respectable"[30] meant nothing to him, and he remained blissfully ignorant to the last of the deep resentment among all classes in India which his policy and methods had caused, or the "thorough contempt" into which he had brought, "even in late eighteenth century England . . . the Company's administration and its morals."[31]

In the annexed territory all avenues to honourable or lucrative employment were shut to Indians. Soldiers dismissed from service of the State were driven to live by plunder.[32] In course of time, as more and more States were annexed or brought under British control, unemployed troopers in growing numbers formed themselves into roving bands of freebooters and took to dacoity. They infested the ravines and jungles of India and made peaceful living impossible over large parts of the country. Dacoity remained an unsolved problem over large parts of the country, in spite of the efforts of several generations of British administration to eradicate it.

"If ever there was a device for ensuring mal-government," Henry Lawrence wrote in 1846, "it is that of a Native ruler and minister both relying on foreign bayonets, and directed by a British Resident".[33] Before him, in 1817, Sir Thomas Munro had written, referring to the subsidiary system:

> It has a natural tendency to render the government of every country in which it exists weak and oppressive; to extinguish all honourable spirit among the higher classes of society, and to degrade and impoverish the whole people. . . .The presence of a British force cuts off every chance of remedy, by supporting the prince on the throne against every foreign and domestic enemy. It renders him indolent, by teaching him to trust to strangers for his security; and cruel and avaricious, by showing him that he has nothing to fear from the hatred of his subjects. Wherever the subsidiary system is introduced, unless the reigning prince be a man of great abilities, the country will soon bear the marks of it in decaying villages and decreasing population.[34]

Mysore was conquered from Tipu Sultan in 1799. Two years later, Carnatic was annexed and Oudh was forced to cede a part of the territory to the British with the result that under their dependence upon the British Government, the people of "two of the noblest provinces of India were, by mis-government, plunged into a state of wretchedness with which . . . hardly any part of the earth has anything to compare."[35]

The system was no less ruinous to the Princes than it was to the people. Pointing to its "inevitable tendency to bring every Native State into which it was introduced, sooner or later, under the executive dominion of the British Government", Munro wrote:

> Even if the prince himself were disposed to adhere rigidly to the alliance, there will always be some amongst his principal officers who will urge him to break. *As long as there remains in the country any high-minded independence, which*

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seeks to throw off the control of the strangers, such counsellors will be found. I have a better opinion of the natives of India than to think that the spirit will ever be completely extinguished; and I can, therefore, have no doubt that the subsidiary system must everywhere run its full course, and destroy every government which it undertakes to protect.[36]

It nearly did.

Lord Dalhousie completed the work that Lord Wellesley had begun, by putting into action his doctrine of "lapse" by which the territory of any Indian ruler, who died without leaving a direct heir, was annexed by the British. Before the nineteenth century was half through, the Maratha Confederacy's power had been broken (1817), Sind seized (1843), the Sikh State liquidated, and the Punjab annexed (1849). Burma was conquered in 1852 and in 1856 Oudh taken over. The Moghul Emperor at Delhi was reduced to a mere shadow. The British emerged from the contest as the supreme power, with no rival seriously to challenge their authority.

4

With success came arrogance. As they felt more and more secure, a "certainty of immeasurable superiority" settled on the British minds. Before the resurgence of the nationalist sentiment in India forced upon the attention of the British people the inherent contradiction between the highest dictates of their conscience and the essentially debasing character of foreign rule in India, the British administration in India had thrown up a remarkable set of officials. Munros and Elphinstones, Malcolms and Tods embodied the best that is in English culture and the ideal of devotion to public service at its highest. Unafflicted yet by self-division that characterised the better sort of Englishmen of a later day, they had sincerely striven to give to India of their best. True, they were not free from a sense of patronising superiority. Indians to them were, after all, "natives". Still they had a genuine affection for a people who no longer constituted a menace to their supremacy and for whose degenerated state, they felt, their subjection under British rule was responsible.

In the beginning there was still a sufficient number of these old-timers, who had seen the best that was in India before she lost her independence, and had memories "when there were still native States not without qualities that called out respect—when a Gurkha war was a frightening campaign, and Bharatpur a still unconquered fastness, (and) when Englishmen and Indians met as foes but as foes who still had hours of friendly equality."[37] Their influence for a while kept the conqueror's arrogance somewhat under check. But never very numerous, they were a dwindling lot. The generation of officials that succeeded them had been brought up under a different tradition. They

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looked upon Indians as a "degenerate race", who had "no particular rights beyond that of accepting the government provided for them, without demurs as to cost or kind."[38] Docile obedience to the foreign power was the highest virtue to which an Indian could aspire. Their attitude towards the people of India was one of unbounded scorn.

Up to Lord William Bentinck's time, no Indians were permitted to drive to the Governor-General's House in a carriage.[39] No Englishman on going to a station "thought of calling on the notables of the district . . . instead certificates of respectability were required of the notables before they could be guaranteed a chair when they visited the officer. . . ."[40] In Calcutta, "many writers expected every Indian to salute them."[41]

Belief in the policy of the "strong arm" was ubiquitous even among officials at the highest level. It was illustrated by Henry Lawrence's dictum: "The best attitude, perhaps the only safe one with Orientals, is that of complete superiority." Charles Napier stated his belief that "the human mind is never better disposed to gratitude and attachment than when softened by fear" and acted accordingly. He restored flogging in the "native army" that William Bentinck had abolished, because "it will not do to let their barbaric vanity gradually wipe away the fear cast . . . by the two battles".[42] To inspire the "Oriental" mind with proper awe of the majesty of British rule, the picture of the Queen was ordered to be kept "covered with a curtain from the gaze of private men and retainers."[43] Only the "well-behaved" were sometimes allowed the privilege of appearing before it to salaam. John Lawrence's statue with the insulting inscription: "Will you be governed by the pen or the sword?—Choose!" overlooking a crossing in one of the provincial capitals continued to challenge the self-respect of India till the late nineteen twenties. The inscription was later modified after a popular agitation but the insult remained.

An astounding amorality was openly professed and unblushingly practised by these "Founders" and "Guardians" of British Rule. Napier's seizure of Sind, described by Major Outram as "most tyrannical positive robbery", and by Napier himself in his diary, as "a very advantageous, useful, humane piece of rascality", after being unanimously disapproved by Sir Robert Peel's Cabinet, was nonchalantly confirmed by Peel himself "as the mischief of retaining was less than the mischief of abandoning it."[44] Sir John Lawrence, with ill-concealed admiration, put on record how Lieutenant Edwardes of Bannu fame dropped his work of revenue settlement "to raise a band of what he styled as 'bold villains ready to risk their own throats and cut those of any one else' "; how he, "availing himself of the hostility which he knew to exist between the different races in the Punjab, enrolled 3,000 Pathans, thus following the reverse of the process which afterwards stood us in good stead during the Mutiny"; and finally, how he "armed

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the Mussalmans of the frontier against the Sikhs and Mussulmans of Mooltan, as we afterwards armed the Sikhs against the Mussalmans and Hindus of Delhi".

A deliberate policy of "lopping off the tall poppies" was adopted. No opportunity was missed to humble the flower of nobility before the people, or to lessen their power and influence. In 1856, the King of Oudh was deposed and his kingdom annexed. Following upon it, a boorish Chief Commissioner occupied a palace "expressly set aside for the King's family".[45] Lord Dalhousie extorted from the Delhi heir-apparent a promise to leave his palace, which he wanted for British military uses, and only regretted that the "silly sentimentality of the Court (of Directors) interposed any impediment to taking the Crown as well as the Palace."[46]

5

Nothing can be more striking, wrote Holt Mackenzie, a British official, in a Minute recorded in 1830, than the "scorn" with which people of India had been practically treated at the hands of "even those who were actuated by the most benevolent motives".[47] Their scorn prevented British rulers from understanding the feelings of the people, their institutions, values and past achievements—in short, all that constitutes a people's richest heritage, and made their record of administration one of ignorant interference with, when it was not one of dismal neglect of, indigenous institutions. Whatever good they tried to do turned to dust, every gift coming from their hands became a Greek gift by virtue of this lack of fundamental sympathy and the alien character of British rule.

The result was India's "four-fold ruin"—economic, political, cultural and spiritual. Her indigenous crafts and industries were killed, her agriculture was ruined, education and culture declined, while the moral and economic drain, continued from year to year and from decade to decade, reduced her to a land of chronic poverty and starvation where, according to a distinguished administrator, Sir W. W. Hunter, one-third of the population did not get a square meal from year's end to year's end.

When the Europeans arrived in India, and up till the eighteenth century, India was a great agricultural as well as manufacturing country, producing marvels of craftsmanship. Her gossamer, muslins and silks, known by such fanciful names as "woven wind" (*baft-hawa*); "evening dew" (*shubnum*) and "flowing water" (*ab-rawan*), were famed throughout the world. Her textile industry alone, according to Orme, "covered the lives of half the people of Hindustan"; while Pyrad, the Portuguese traveller, testified that "Every one from the Cape of Good Hope to China—man and woman"—was clothed "from head to foot" in the products of Indian handlooms.

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Confronted by the question how to provide the purchasing power without having to import bullion from home, in return for the Eastern commodities that were everywhere in request in Europe, while Europeans had nothing to offer in return except "toys" and inconsiderable quantities of broad cloth, the Dutch Governor Coen had suggested the expedient of developing the Company's possessions and investing all available capital in the "principal means of production—many thousands of slaves".[48] His plan was vetoed by the Dutch Government but was taken up by the British. Saadatulla Khan was the Nabob of Arcot, and Imam Sahib—a courtier with a peculiar weakness for "palm-grease" —Bakshi (Paymaster) to the Nabob. With his assistance and collusion, the factors of Fort St. George obtained from the Nabob the following writ, addressed to the "several havildars under our jurisdiction", which turned whole populations of artisans in the Nabob's territory virtually into their slaves:

> The people of the Governor of Madras, who come to your country to buy cloth, is the occasion of my writing this; to let you know it is my will you give strict order to all the merchants in your parts, to sell such goods as are proper for the Governor of Madras only to his people, and that they immediately deliver whatever cloth they have ready to his Gomastas. What they refuse you permit them to sell anywhere. Take care that none buy such goods in your parts but his people; for this is my strict command; and take penalties from your merchants to perform the same.[49]

In Bengal, even this was not necessary. The Company were the virtual sovereign. They could do as they pleased. Their servants made the weavers sign bonds for the delivery of a certain quantity of goods at a certain amount as an advance, the assent of the weaver being not considered necessary. "And upon the weavers refusing to take the money offered . . . they have had it tied in their girdles, and they have been sent away with a flogging. . . . A number of these weavers are generally also registered in the books of the Company's Gomastahs (agents), and not permitted to work for any others, being transferred from one to another as so many slaves."[50] Upon their inability to execute such agreements as were forced upon them, they "had their goods seized and sold on the spot to make good the deficiency."[51] The winders of raw silk in Bengal in particular were so terribly oppressed that, records Bolts, "instances have been known of their cutting off their thumbs to prevent their being forced to wind silk".[52]

As with the textiles, so with other indigenous manufactures. They were first exploited for commercial gain and then killed to help the rising British manufacture. The methods employed ranged from total ban to prohibitive duties on Indian manufactured goods, and levying of ruinous taxes on Indian artisans. The most notorious of these was the Mutarfa, a tax levied "severally on all the processes and implements

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used in a trade, as well as on the raw material and the finished product". It had the effect not unfrequently of raising the cost of the manufactures by more than six times; while the discretionary powers under which the tax was collected provided an occasion for unlimited extortion and oppression, and worst of all, for domiciliary visits by the Company's servants. These came to be so much dreaded that even to this day in South India the sight of a stray puff of cotton-wool lying about one's cottage is regarded by the villager as a sign of ill-luck. The superstition dates back to the time when a wisp of flying cotton-wool suggested the existence of cotton manufacturers in the locality and led to raids by the Company's servants into the privacy of the people's homes, with all the accompanying indignities which can be better imagined than described.

Characterising the destruction by Britain of India's cottage industries, as a "melancholy instance of wrong done to India by the country on which she had become dependent", the historian H. H. Wilson wrote:

> It was stated in evidence (in 1813) that the cotton and silk goods of India up to the period could be sold for a profit in the British market at a price from 50 to 60 per cent. lower than those fabricated in England. It consequently became necessary to protect the latter by duties of 70 and 80 per cent. on their value, or by positive prohibition. Had this not been the case, had not such prohibitory duties and decrees existed, the mills of Paisley and Manchester would have been stopped in their outset, and could scarcely have been again set in motion, even by the power of steam. They were created by the sacrifice of the Indian manufacture. Had India been independent, she would have retaliated, would have imposed prohibitive duties upon British goods, and would thus have preserved her own productive industry from annihilation. This act of self-defence was not permitted her; she was at the mercy of the stranger. British goods were forced upon her without paying any duty, and the foreign manufacturer employed the arm of political injustice to keep down and ultimately strangle a competitor with whom he could not have contended on equal terms.[53]

India was thus forced to become a provider of raw materials and a consumer of British manufactured goods. Deprived of their ancestral callings and with no alternative mode of employment available to them, the artisans died in tens of millions. Lord Bentinck in 1834 wrote that "the misery hardly finds a parallel in the history of commerce. The bones of the cotton weavers are bleaching the plains of India."[54]

6

It has been suggested that India's indigenous crafts would in any case have succumbed before the march of industrial progress in England in the eighteenth century. May be, but there is no inevitability in

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history. Inventions and discoveries, observes Cunnigham in his *Social History of England,* often seem to be merely fortuitous, but it is not sufficient to attribute their rise in the eighteenth century in England to a "special and unaccountable" burst of inventive genius. To point out that Ark Wright and Watt were fortunate in the fact that the times were ripe for them, "is not to detract from their merits", he goes on to add. There had been many inventive men from the time of William Lee and Dodo Dudley, but the conditions of their days were unfavourable for their success. "The introduction of expensive implements or processes involves a vast outlay; it is not worth while for any man, however energetic, to make the attempt unless he has a considerable command of capital and has access to large markets."[55]

The normal trade of the merchant companies in the seventeenth century could not provide sufficient surplus capital needed for the introduction of mechanical improvements in manufacturing. Mechanical inventions consequently did not become a practical success in England till the eighteenth century provided the requisite conditions. The most important of these, according to Cunningham, was a "vast store of money; and money not hoarded but in motion". The arrival of the Bengal silver "not only increased the mass of money but stimulated its movement also".

The amount of treasure transformed from India to English banks during 57 years between Plassey and Waterloo has been computed at £ 500,000,000 to £ 1,000,000,000. "Possibly since the world began," writes Brooke Adams in his book *The Law of Civilization and Decay,* "no investment had ever yielded the profit reaped from the Indian plunder, because for fifty years Great Britain stood without a competitor." Adducing the figures of the growth of England's debt as a measure of her savings and the rapid expansion of the credit system that followed, Brooke Adams comments:

> Credit is the chosen vehicle of energy. . . and no sooner had treasure enough accumulated in London to offer it a foundation, than it shot up .with marvellous rapidity.

For more than sixty years after the foundation of the Bank of England, its smallest note had been for £ 20, a note too large to circulate freely. Similarly in 1750, there were not twelve "bankers' shops" in the provinces. But in 1759, the Bank of England for the first time issued £ 10 and £ 15 notes, there were "bankers' shops" in every town, and in the country private firms poured forth a flood of paper.[56] Before Plassey was fought and won, Lancashire spinning and weaving were, according to Baines' testimony, on a par with India, "so far as machinery was concerned",[57] while in skill they lagged far behind. Similarly, about 1750, English iron industry was in full decline because of the destruction

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of the forests for fuel. "At that time four-fifths of the iron used in England came from Sweden." Plassey was fought in 1757. Very soon after, Bengal silver began to arrive and "probably nothing has ever equalled," remarks Brooke Adams, "the rapidity of change which followed." Flying-shuttle was invented in 1760. The same year saw replacement of wood by coal in smelting; Watt's steam engine came in 1768 and Cartwright's powerloom in 1785.

But though these machines served as outlets for the accelerating movement of the time they did not cause that acceleration. In themselves inventions are passive, many of the most important having lain dormant for centuries, waiting for a sufficient store of force to have accumulated to set them working....Steam had been experimented upon long before the birth of Watt. The least part of Watt's labour lay in conceiving his idea; he consumed his life marketing it. Before the influx of the Indian treasure, and the expansion of credit which followed, no force sufficient for this purpose existed; and *had Watt lived fifty years earlier, he and his invention must have perished together.* Considering the difficulties under which Mathew Boulton, the ablest and most energetic manufacturer of his time, nearly succumbed, no one can doubt that without Boulton's works at Birmingham the engine could not have been produced, and yet before 1760 such works could not have been organised.[58]

The connection between the beginning of the drain of Indian wealth to England and the swift uprising of the British industries was thus causal, not casual.

The inflow of the wealth of the East, by advancing the date of the industrial revolution in England, gave her an initial advantage in the race for industrial supremacy and overseas possessions in the scramble that followed among European nations, to secure markets for their surplus production and sources of cheap raw material to feed their factory system. Thus began the era of imperialist expansion that became the outstanding fact of history in the nineteenth century, and shaped the course of world events, particularly in the two continents of Asia and Africa.

The process, more or less, everywhere was the same. The flag followed trade, factories developed into forts, and economic dependence led to the political subjection of the populations concerned. Historically, India's non-violent struggle for independence presented the antithesis of this process. Spinning-wheel with all its implications naturally became the symbol of this movement. Its resurrection by a conscious act of will by the three hundred millions of India, declared Gandhiji, held in it the possibility of setting off in the reverse the process that had inaugurated the era of colonialism and imperialist expansion.

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Spinning-wheel had therefore a message for all the subject and oppressed races of the world struggling for liberation.

7

The destruction of Indian crafts left agriculture as the only means of subsistence on which the bulk of Indian population could rely. But under British rule, even this source soon dried up. Before the British, land in India was not a commodity. It could not be mortgaged, distrained or auctioned for non-payment of dues or a debt incurred. A cultivator unable to meet his obligation might be imprisoned, tortured or otherwise oppressed by an arbitrary ruler, but he and his children could not be dispossessed of their source of living which land was to them. An unlucky or improvident cultivator might occasionally thus perish or be reduced to destitution but agriculture survived. Introduction of the English conception of landlordism by British Governors, who themselves largely came from the landlord class, coupled with the realisation of rent as a fixed amount in cash instead of a percentage of the produce, altered the whole picture. For the first time land became a commodity that could be mortgaged or distrained. The emergence of landlordism, to quote Jawaharlal Nehru, by depriving the village community of all control over the land and its produce resulted in "the breakdown of the joint life and corporate character of the community, and the cooperative system of services and functions began to disappear gradually."[59] With the threat of eviction hanging like the Damocles' sword over his head, the cultivator could be rack-rented; his land became more and more heavily mortgaged. The result was progressive pauperisation of the cultivating class and decay of agriculture.

All European travellers who had visited the East through three centuries, observed Lt. Col. Briggs in 1830, had noted the flourishing condition of India's agriculture under the Moghul Emperors; and "the wealth, the population, and the national prosperity of India, far surpassing what they had seen in Europe", had filled them with astonishment.[60] But under British rule so heavy was the land tax and such was the rigour with which it was collected, records Bolts, that the Ryots not unfrequently were driven "to sell their children in order to pay their rents".[61] In 1770, a terrible famine carried off ten millions of people, one-third of the entire population of Bengal. Yet the revenue was collected fully by adding 10 per cent. "by which the living made good revenue losses which were owing to other tax-payers having been so unpatriotic as to die".[62] By 1774, stated Philip Francis before a Select Committee of the House of Commons, at least two-thirds of the whole surface of Bengal and Bihar was in a state of depopulation. "The timid Hindoo flies from the tyranny which he dare not resist."[63]

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In the neighbouring province of Oudh, defaulters were "confined in open cages . . . under the Indian sun, . . . fathers were compelled to sell their children".[64] When they tried to flee from the unbearable exactions, troops were sent to prevent their flight. Brought to bay, they resisted. "Then followed horrors and executions with which the untrained tillers of the soil are put down by the infuriated soldiery."[65]

Wherever the British power spread, the blight followed, and the longer it continued, the worse became the plight of the peasantry and the general poverty of the people. In a minute dated 18th September, 1789, Lord Cornwallis reported: "I may safely assert that one-third of the Company's territory in Hindustan is now a jungle inhabited only by wild beasts."[66]

In 1764, the last Moghul Ruler of Bengal was deposed. Within thirty years, the British rulers raised from the same territory a revenue three and a quarter times the previous figure.[67] In Allahabad and some other rich districts that were ceded by the Nawab of Oudh to the British in 1862, within three years of the cession, the land revenue was increased from £ 1,352,347 to £ 1,682,306. In Bombay the land revenue of the territory conquered from the Marathas in 1817 shot up to nearly double the amount, viz. from £ 800,000 to £ 1,500,000 within a few years of British rule. There were instances in Bombay, records a Bombay Administration Report, where the land revenue assessed upon certain lands actually exceeded the gross produce. "Every effort, lawful and unlawful, was made to get the utmost out of the wretched peasantry, who were subjected to torture, in some instances, cruel and revolting beyond all description. . . . Numbers abandoned their homes and fled into the neighbouring Native States. Large tracts of land were thrown out of cultivation, and in some districts no more than a third of the cultivable area remained in occupation."[68]

Bishop Heber, after an extensive tour through the country, wrote in 1826 that the peasantry in the Company's provinces were "on the whole worse off, poorer and more dispirited than the subjects of the Native princes. No Native Prince demands the rent which we do." Col. Briggs, another distinguished British Settlement Officer, an authority on the nature of land-tax in India and author of a monumental book on that subject, showed in his great work that the endeavour to sweep away the entire profits from the land, leaving to cultivators barely enough to support their lives, was the main cause of the poverty of India under British rule. "I conscientiously believe," he wrote, "that under no Government whatever, Hindu or Mahomedan, professing to be actuated by law, was any system so subversive of the prosperity of the people at large as that which has marked our administration. . . . A Land Tax like that which now exists in India . . . was never known under any Government in Europe or Asia."[69]

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8

Introduction by the British of a unified legal system, before which in theory all were equal, might have counted as the crowning achievement of British rule in India, had not the "equality" been found to be largely fictitious and racial superiority the bedrock on which British power actually rested (See Chapter V, Section 3). Instead of being a levelling influence, British legal system, by investing customary usage with the sanction of law, became a hindrance in the way of social equality, and British Courts were in fact used to uphold the curse of untouchability by sending to prison those who tried to exercise the right of civic equality with the so-called caste-people. Religious neutrality, under the British, thus in fact became interference with the birthright of the followers of a religion to reform it in answer to the changing times, and rid it of the evils that might have crept into it.

Experience has again and again shown that only that is beneficent to a people which has come from its core. The new legal system was neither derived from India's ancient institutions nor assimilated with them, with the result that, as Sir William Sleeman, who had been sent by Lord Dalhousie in 1848 as Resident at Lucknow, bore witness, "Our legal methods wrought more harm than all other evil agencies together."[70] They gave rise to chaos and oppression and put a premium on dishonesty and perjury.

For centuries prior to British rule, law and justice in India had been administered solely by Indians through their own indigenous institutions. The indigenous system met all the needs of society and, according to the testimony of numerous travellers and historians, under it people in large parts of the country flourished, throve and were happy.[71] On all accounts, the *panchayat* justice was speedy, efficient and cheap. The *panchayat* system fostered love of justice and fairplay and encouraged the habit of truth-telling. The judicial machinery set up by the British in its place was inadequate, "obscure, complicated and pedantic". It made justice so tardy and expensive that there was a "virtual denial of justice" to the mass of the people. Judges and magistrates were exclusively Europeans. They understood neither the language nor the customs and feelings of the people. The taking of oaths in the law courts was a thing which no respectable Indian could stomach, so much so that Frederick Shore, after long judicial experience, came to the conclusion that if any respectable Hindu gave evidence in a British court, it was "presumptive evidence against the respectability of his character."[72] British courts, as a result, came to be detested by the people as nothing else.

Between 1800 and 1810, Bengal was harried by dacoits. The police were ill-paid and corrupt. "A monstrous and disorganised state

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of society", in consequence, "existed under the eye of the Supreme British authorities, and almost at the very seat of the Government."[73] Daring dacoities were committed in broad daylight in large towns and centres of trade and the inhabitants of villages had very often to purchase peace by paying black-mail to local Rob Roys. Special Magistrates under European Superintendents were appointed and armed with special powers to put down robbery. The remedy became worse than the disease. People were unwilling to come forward to give evidence. "Armies of witnesses" were consequently dragged from their homes, until the people "considered it one of the severest punishments to be cited as witnesses." The Magistrates employed '*goendas*', or spies to give information against suspected people. Inhabitants of villages were indiscriminately apprehended on false information; they were kept in jail for months, and sometimes for years before they were brought to Court. Very often they perished in prisons. No wonder, the villagers "dreaded the malice of the informer more than the wrath of the Magistrate."[74] "Such shocking cruelty, such a monstrous perversion of justice," wrote Sir Henry Strachey, "committed with our eyes open and with deliberation, the imprisonment of multitudes, the harassing, the subornation of perjury, the plunder, the death of innocent men in jail, these scenes I conceive to be most discreditable to those who permitted them. . . . Dacoity itself, dreadful as it is, cannot be compared in its quantum of mischief to what was produced by this horrid system."[75]

Worst of all was the effect on the people's character. The essentially peace-loving and straightforward nature of Indian village folk had been noted by numerous authorities. Thomas Munro wrote in a Memorandum in 1813 that he had been "astonished" at the facility with which suits among the Indian village folk were settled, and at the fairness with which the losing party acknowledged the claim against him.[76] Judge Erskin Perry had similarly testified before a House of Commons Committee, referring to the high standard of commercial integrity of the people of India, that the "sanctity" of mercantile books in India was such that "in the Native courts of justice, the production of the books was quite conclusive as to the veracity of any transaction in dispute."[77] Munro was therefore shocked when the failure of British judicial system in India was blamed on the "litigious" habits of the Indians. He had had ample opportunity of observing them in every station, he stated, and he could affirm that they were "not litigious. . . . Our system produces the litigation which we groundlessly impute to the character of the people."[78] In the *panchayat*, the peasant spoke the truth. There were no people in the world, stated Sir William Sleeman in 1848, from whom "it is more easy to get it (truthful testimony) in their own village communities, where they state it before their relations, elders and neighbours, whose esteem is necessary to happiness and can be obtained only by an adherence to the truth."[79]

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He had before him hundreds of cases, he said, in which "a man's prosperity, liberty and life has depended on his telling a lie and he has refused to tell it".[80] In the isolated hamlets of hills and forests, men could be "made to do almost anything rather than tell a lie".[81] In the valley of the Nerbudda, similarly "it was almost impossible to teach a wild Gond of the hills and jungles the *occasional* value of a lie!"[82] Yet, the evidence of the same people in British Courts was "fantastically unreliable". The fault was not of the people, Sir William Sleeman maintained, but of the system. "The quality of testimony . . . like that of every other commodity deteriorates under a system which renders the good of no more value *in exchanges* than the bad. The formality of our courts here, as everywhere else, tends to impair, more or less, the quality of what they receive."[83]

Such was the abhorrence in which British law courts were held by the rich and the poor alike that it was stated that during Lake's Laswari campaign "whole populations fled in terror, not from 'the brutal and licentious soldiery', but from the 'High Court' which was believed to be accompanying them!"[84]

9

The deterioration of national character is the inevitable consequence of alien rule. India had been conquered before. But she had never lost her independence, she had never been enslaved. Under British rule she, for the first time, became an appendage of another country. As a result, she was drained dry. But far more baneful than the economic drain was the "moral drain" that resulted from it. Owing partly to distrust of Indians and partly to cupidity, Indians were excluded practically from all positions of trust and responsibility in the administration of the country under early British rule. This was done in the name of efficiency. It actually made the administration both inefficient and corrupt. The inequity and shortsightedness of it aroused Sir Thomas Munro's indignation. "With what grace can we talk of our paternal Government," he indignantly asked in a famous Minute dated December 31, 1834,

> if we exclude them (Indians) from every important office? . . . Such an interdiction is to pass a sentence of degradation on a whole people for which no benefit can ever compensate. There is no instance in the world of so humiliating a sentence having ever been passed upon any nation....What is...the use of great attainments, if they are not to be devoted to their noblest purpose, the service of the community?...
>
> Our books...will do little or nothing; dry simple literature will never improve the character of a nation....This is true of every nation....*Let Britain be subjugated by a foreign power* tomorrow, let the people be excluded from all share in the Government, from public honours, from every office

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of high trust or emolument, and let them in every situation be considered as unworthy of trust, *and all their knowledge and all their literature, sacred and profane, would not save them from becoming, in another generation or two, a low-minded, deceitful and dishonest race....*

It is an old observation that he who loses his liberty loses half his virtue. This is true of nations as well as of individuals. To have no property scarcely degrades more...than...to have property at the disposal of a foreign government in which we have no share. The enslaved nation loses the privileges of a nation as the slave does those of a freeman; it loses the privilege of taxing itself, of making its own laws, of having any share in their administration, or in the general government of the country. British India has none of these privileges.[85]

"Are we to be satisfied with merely securing our power and protecting the inhabitants, leaving them to sink gradually in character, lower than at present, or, are we to endeavour . . . to render them worthy of filling higher situations in the management of their country?" he asked, and answered: "It ought undoubtedly to be our aim to raise the minds of the natives, and to take care that whenever our connection with India might cease, it did not appear that the only fruit of our dominion there had been to leave the people more abject and less able to govern themselves than when we found them."

Even if it were possible to carry on administration by excluding every Indian from public service, he pleaded, self-interest no less than abstract justice demanded that this should not be done. "In proportion as we exclude them . . . from these, we lose our hold on them, and were the exclusion entire, we should have their hatred in place of their attachment, *their feelings would be communicated to the whole population, and to the native troops, and would excite a spirit of discontent too powerful for us to subdue or resist.*" If on the other hand, Indians were to "submit silently and without opposition", he went on to say, that would be even worse. "They would sink in character . . . and would degenerate into an . . . abject race, incapable of any higher pursuit than the mere gratification of their appetites". He concluded: "*It would certainly be more desirable that we should be expelled from the country altogether, than that the result of our system of government should be such a debasement of a whole people.*"[86]

He therefore suggested that while for the preservation of their dominion in this country, they should reserve for Europeans all the higher offices, civil and military, such as could be left in the hands of Indians "without danger to our power" might with advantage be entrusted to them. "We already occupy every office of importance. Were we to descend to those which are more humble and now filled by natives, we should lower our character and not perform the duties so well."[87]

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Sir John Malcolm, who succeeded Elphinstone as the Governor of Bombay, was no less emphatic. If their plans of spreading education were not associated with "the creation of duties that will employ the minds we enlighten", he prophesied, this would only prepare elements that would hasten the destruction of their empire. "The moral evil to us does not stand alone. It carries with it its Nemesis, the seeds of the destruction of the Empire itself."

But nothing can be more blinding than prejudice, especially when it is joined to narrow self-interest. Most revealing was the reply of one of the witnesses to a question before a House of Commons Committee in 1831.

"Supposing . . . Englishmen alone were employed in the higher branches of employment in Ireland, do you not conceive that the Irish would consider it a stigma upon them?"

"I consider that the *feeling of degradation, from being governed by foreigners, is a feeling altogether European. I believe it has little or no existence in any part of Asia.*"[88]

Up to 1857, there were only 256 Indians drawing over £ 360 (Rs. 5,400) a year[89]. A quarter of a century later, out of a total of 2,388 officers in the higher branches of the civil and military departments drawing Rs. 10,000 a year and upwards, the number of Indians was only sixty.[90]

One of the provisions of the Act renewing the Charter of the Company in 1833 contained the famous clause: "No Indian subject of His Majesty's resident in India shall, by reason only of his religion, place of birth, descent, colour or any of them, be disabled from holding any place, office or employment under the Company."[91] But hardly had that Act been passed when, as Lord Lytton, Viceroy of India, afterwards revealed, the Government began to devise means for evading the fulfilment of it. In a confidential letter to Lord Cranbrook he wrote:

> We have had to choose between prohibiting them and cheating them, and we have chosen the least straightforward course....Since I am writing confidentially, I do not hesitate to say that both the Governments of England and of India appear to me, up to the present moment, unable to answer satisfactorily the charge of having taken every means in their power of breaking to the heart the words of promise they had uttered to the ear.[92]

The invidious discrimination became a festering sore in India's body politic. The moral drain continued. Beyond the positions of petty clerks or similar subordinate positions, all experience and knowledge of statesmanship, of administration and of high scientific or learned professions was drained away when the persons holding them at the end of their services returned to England. All the "talent and nobility of intellect and soul, which nature gives to every country" became to India a lost treasure.

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10

It had been urged against the Indian Government, wrote Elphinstone, Governor of Bombay in 1824, that they had "subverted" the States of the East, and shut up all the sources from which the magnificence of the country was derived and that they had not themselves "constructed a single work, either of utility or of splendour". But it could, with more justice, be alleged, he said, that they had "dried up the fountains of native talent, and that from the nature of our conquest, not only all encouragement to the advancement of knowledge is withdrawn, but even the actual learning of the nation is likely to be lost and the productions of former genius to be forgotten."[93]

Contrary to the commonly held notion, not only did indigenous learning decline, but even elementary education in India at first suffered a set back under British rule. Before British rule, India had its indigenous system of education which brought elementary education within the reach of even the poorest. "The indigenous village schools," wrote the Court of Directors in an Education Despatch in 1814, "are a part of the village system. . . . This venerable and benevolent institution . . . is represented to have withstood the shock of revolutions and to its operation is ascribed the general intelligence of the native."[94] The Moghul rulers recognised the duty of the State to spread education and encouraged learning and had made endowments of rent-free lands to *Pathshalas*, *Maktabs* and *Madrasas*. The East India Company, to increase revenue for its investment, confiscated most of these lands. The *Maktabs* and *Pathshalas* had consequently to close down. To cite one instance only, the number of schools in the Punjab fell from 30,000[95] in 1849 to 2,171 in 1858-59, to 1,853 in 1859-60, and to 1,526 in 1881-82.[96]

Spread of Western education was opposed under early British rule on account of its "unsettling effect" on the Indian mind. In 1792, when Wilberforce proposed to add two clauses to the Charter Act of that year for sending out school-masters to India, it aroused strong opposition in the Court of Directors. Said one of the Directors on that occasion that they had just lost America for their "folly in having allowed the establishment of schools and colleges" and that "it would not do for us to repeat the same act of folly in regard to India."[97]

Lord Ellenborough, who went to India as Governor-General in 1842, expressed the same fear half a century later when he said to Poet Rabindranath Tagore's grandfather, Dwarkanath Tagore, the foremost Indian publicist of his time and an ardent advocate of English education: "If these gentlemen who wish to educate the Natives of India were to succeed to the utmost extent of their desire we should not remain in this country for three months."[98]

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"It was our policy in those days," wrote Kaye in his *Life of Metcalfe*, "to keep the natives of India in the profoundest possible state of barbarism and darkness, and every attempt to diffuse the light of knowledge among the people, either of our own or the independent States, was vehemently opposed."[99] The printing press and newspapers were particularly frowned upon. The dread of "diffusion of knowledge" became "a chronic disease".

Some measure of English education, however, indirectly seeped in, because of the need to train a sufficient number of low-paid clerks to run the administration. The Christian missionary, too, entered the field of education, primarily for the spread of the Gospel.

The question soon arose whether education in India should be given through the medium of the Indian languages or through English. The supporters of the former view were known as "Orientalists" and of the latter view as "Anglacists". In 1835, the "Orientalists" in a battle royal with the "Anglacists" were routed and Macaulay introduced his scheme of imparting education on Western lines with English as the medium. The same scorn and lack of fellow-feeling that marred various other "beneficent" activities of the ruling power, characterised this one also. Warren Hastings, the first Governor-General of India, had observed that writings of the Indian philosophers would "survive when the British dominion in India shall have long ceased to exist and when the sources which it once yielded of wealth and power are lost to remembrance."[100] But Macaulay believed that "a single shelf of a good European library" was worth "the whole native literature of India and Arabia". He looked upon the languages and literature of the East "as a diseased limb" which he proposed to cut off.[101]

This would have been bad enough if it had been due to mere ignorance; but to ignorance Macaulay joined prejudice. Nor was his mind free from a religious bias. That his educational policy was bound to subvert the culture and undermine the faith of those who came under its influence, mattered little to him. In fact he regarded it as a consummation devoutly to be wished. In a letter to his father from Calcutta on October 13, 1836, he wrote:

> No Hindoo who has received an English education, ever remains sincerely attached to his religion. Some continue to profess it as a matter of policy, but many profess themselves as Deists and some embrace Christianity. *It is my firm belief that if our plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolater* (Hindu) among the respectable classes in Bengal thirty years hence. . . . I heartily rejoice at the prospect.[102]

Sir Charles Trevelyan, Macaulay's brother-in-law and later Governor of Madras, in a Memorandum that he submitted to the Committee set up by Parliament in 1853 to inquire into Indian affairs, tried to

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justify the policy to discourage the study of Arabic and Sanskrit. His argument was that the Muslims regarded non-Muslims as "infidel usurpers, with whom no measures are to be kept except what policy may require", while the Hindu system though less "fierce and aggressive" was even more exclusive. It would be folly on the part of the British, therefore, he urged, to promote a plan of national education that would be "perpetually reminding the Mahomedans that we are infidel usurpers of some of the fairest realms of the Faithful and the Hindus that we are unclean beasts. . . . Our bitterest enemies could not desire more than that we should propagate systems of learning which excite the strongest of feelings of human nature against ourselves." On the other hand, if Indian mind was nurtured on English literature, this could not

but be favourable to the English connection. Familiarly acquainted with us by means of our literature, the Indian youth almost cease to regard us as foreigners. They speak of our great men with the same enthusiasm as we do. Educated in the same way, interested in the same objects, engaged in the same pursuits with ourselves, they become more English than Hindoos, just as the Roman Provincials became more Romans than Gauls or Italians.[103]

Besides,

As long as the natives are left to brood over their former independence, their sole specific for improving their condition is the immediate and total expulsion of the English....It is only by the infusion of European ideas that a new direction can be given to national views. The young men brought up at our seminaries turn with contempt from the barbarous despotism under which their ancestors groaned to the prospect of improving their national institutions on the English model....they have no notion of any improvement but such as rivets their connection with the English, and makes them dependent on English protection and instruction....[104]

Dr. Duff, another Anglacist, wrote:

When the Romans conquered a province, they forthwith set themselves to the task of Romanizing it; that is, they strove to create a taste for their own more refined language and literature and thereby aimed at turning the...thought and the feeling and the fancy of the subjugated people into Roman channels, which fed and augmented Roman interests.[105]

A sordid consideration was put forth in the Education Despatch of 1854 in support of the unnatural system of education introduced by Lord Bentinck. Indians, Munroe, John Malcolm and Elphinstone had pointed out, had hitherto proved poor customers of European articles because of their "simple habits of life and attire", their "religious" outlook and above all, "the excellence of their own manufactures". Western education, by changing their cultural values, the Education Despatch suggested, "*would secure to us a larger and more certain supply of*

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many articles necessary for our manufactures and extensively consumed by all classes of our population *as well as an almost inexhaustible demand for the produce of British labour.*"

The aim of English education, stated Macaulay, should be "to create a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect." Those who had received this education would become the means of diffusion of Western culture, science and learning among the Indian masses and of resuscitating their own. This came to be known as "filtration" theory. What English education actually achieved was to denationalise, de-Indianise and turn into "imitation Europeans" those who came under its influence. They lost their moorings and were lost to themselves and to the country. In the words of Lord Ronaldshay, one time Governor of Bengal,

> By the middle of the nineteenth century a period of intellectual anarchy had set in, which swept the rising generation before it like a craft which has snapped its moorings. Westernism became the fashion of the day—and Westernism demanded of its votaries that they should cry down the civilisation of their own country. The more ardent their admiration for everything Western, the more vehement became their denunciation of everything Eastern. The ancient learning was despised; ancient custom and tradition were thrust aside; ancient religion was decried as an outworn superstition. The ancient foundations upon which the complex structure of Hindu society had been built up were undermined; and the new generation of iconoclasts found little enough with which to underpin the edifice which they were so recklessly depriving of its own foundations.[106]

Among the educated youth Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic came to be regarded as "barbarous, unwholesome and unfashionable". For history—particularly Indian history—they had an "unnameable horror". Use of the mother tongue was looked upon as undignified and a sign of backwardness. They adopted Western food, dress and way of living, and aped Western manners and speech. In the result they became strangers in their own land, and were alienated by their habits, language and way of thinking, from the mass of the people. Michael Madhusudan Datta, the famous Bengali poet, boasted that he "even dreamed in English".[107] When the realisation came to him of the unreality of the dream, he had, in the words of a modern literary critic, already "wasted his rare gifts in the foredoomed enterprise to *become* a European and rounded up in being, alas, only potentially a great Bengali poet".[108]

In the wake of this reaction against their own past, came religious scepticism, which "ate its way into the moral fibre of young Bengal with all the virulence of a corroding acid."[109] Irreverence, indiscipline and dissipation became the fashion among the educated youth. Some of

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them, to show off their "emancipation", would "fling beef bones into the houses of the orthodox, would go round shouting, 'We have eaten Mussalman bread' (and) would stage ceremonies of mock conversion to Islam."[110] Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, a half-caste Portuguese, a free-thinker and poet, styled by his admirers the "Byron of Bengal", became the centre of a cult which could only be epitomised as indulgence in "beef, bawdry and drinking". Babu Raj Narayan Bose, a well-known Bengali landlord, philanthropist and educationist of the nineteenth century, grandfather of Aurobindo Ghosh on the mother's side, has described in his autobiography how in his days, "it was a common belief of the alumni of the college that the drinking of wine was one of the concomitants of civilisation", and how he himself fell a victim to that evil, ruining his health. According to other witnesses, "Intemperate drinking and licentiousness of thought, taste and character were fearfully rampant. Infidelity, indifference to religion and point-blank atheism were unblushingly professed."[111]

The cultural assault was paralleled by the missionary offensive against the religious beliefs of the people. A scurrilous campaign, in which ignorance, prejudice and wilful distortion vied with fanaticism and bigotry of the rankest description as the stock-in-trade of the propagandist, was let loose against the cherished beliefs and religious practices of all faiths other than the Christian. All the subtle arts of casuistry and seduction were employed to mislead the ignorant and pervert the simple-minded from their faith. Lord Minto was at last forced to forbid missionary propagandist preaching in Calcutta. A storm was raised by the supporters of the missionaries in London, when he ordered suppression of one of the missionary tracts of a particularly scurrilous character, which he characterised in a letter to the Chairman of the Court of Directors, as aiming, figuratively, "at a general massacre of the Brahmins of this country".[112]

Bengal society received a rude shock when a number of young men of outstanding ability and character in a missionary college in Calcutta, coming from some of the highest Hindu families, were converted to Christianity. "For a while it looked," observe Edward Thompson and G. T. Garratt in their *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, "as if Bengal, led by its young intelligentsia, was at the start of a mass movement into Christianity. . . . Macaulay's belief that enlightenment would kill Hinduism and bring in Christianity, so derided now, in its context was a reasonable guess."[113] That these expectations were not realised, was not the fault of the system.

11

The proverbial worm turned at last. In 1857 came the great Revolt, touched off by the refusal of Indian Sepoys at Meerut to handle

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cartridges greased with the animal fat, forbidden by their religion. These cartridges were the standard ammunition issued with the new Enfield rifle that had been introduced in the Indian army, and required to be bitten off before they could be fired. Soon large parts of the country were ablaze.

Greased cartridges, however, provided merely the occasion. The real cause lay deeper. "He was persuaded," observed Disraeli in a speech in the House of Commons on July 27, 1857, "that the mutineers of the Bengal army were not so much the avengers of professional grievances as the exponents of general discontent."[114] In fact "in several places the populace rose before the sepoys at those stations mutinied."[115]

For a century the people had suffered in silence. Detestation of foreign rule had permeated every rank of society. The British policy "to lower or destroy the higher ranks of society (and) to bring them all . . . to one level" by "depriving them of their former weight and influence"[116] had alienated the richer gentry and the aristocracy. The disbandment of armies in the States, that were either annexed or reduced to a state of vassalage, had thrown out of employment large numbers of the fighting profession of all ranks. In the annexed territories, the oppression and the harassment of the common people, particularly the peasantry, by hordes of corrupt, overbearing officials had grown beyond endurance; while interference with their way of life and ancient institutions, to which they were greatly attached, and ruthless exploitation, which had turned whole flourishing districts into a desert waste, had taken the detestation of foreign rule into the hovels of the poor no less than the palaces of the rich. The whole country was in a state of ferment. Members of the deposed royalty and those whose thrones were in danger provided the leadership. They became the spearhead and rallying centres of the revolt.

There was a strong leaven of evangelical zeal in England among all classes in the fifties and sixties of the nineteenth century. Ross Mangles, the Chairman of the Board of Directors, in a public utterance on the eve of the 1857 Rising, said: "Providence has entrusted the extensive empire of Hindustan to England, in order that the banner of Christ should wave triumphant from one end of India to the other. Everyone must exert all his strength that there be no dilatoriness on any account in completing the grand work of making all India Christian."[117] Lord Palmerston, at a public banquet given in honour of Lord Canning, when he was appointed Governor-General, delivered himself of the sentiment that "perhaps it might be our lot to confer on the countless millions of India a higher and nobler gift than any mere human knowledge".[118] Herbert Edwardes .who was Commissioner of Peshawar before the 1857 outbreak, leaned strongly to the view that

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Providence had placed India in British hands in order that the people might be Christianized....Till India is leavened with Christianity, she will be unfit for freedom. When India is leavened with Christianity, she will be unfit for anything *less;* and England may then...leave the stately daughter she has reared to walk the future with a free imperial step. I firmly believe this is what God meant England to do with India.[119]

These aspirations of perfervid evangelism, so heart-warming to the British imperialist, with whose sentiments they perfectly harmonised, were regarded with consternation by the Indian folk, who treasured their ancestral faith above all that they had been deprived of and what the world generally prizes.

No mere military mutiny, the 1857 Rising had a popular backing particularly in the United Provinces. The strong opposition to foreign rule was common to all ranks of Indian society. In the words of Justine McCarthy, it made the Moslems and the Hindus forget their religious antipathies. "The Meerut sepoys found in a moment a leader, a flag and a cause, and the Mutiny was transformed into a revolutionary war."[120]

The bulk of the people, however, had for too long been tyrannised over by their own feudal lords as well as the foreigner. They were too dispirited and disorganised for effective action; and they lacked military training, organisation and equipment. The British successfully played off one section against another, raised mercenary armies of Gurkhas and Sikhs and were able to make use of the rulers of a number of Indian States, who had long depended on British help to sustain them in their autocratic misrule against their own subjects. The revolt was put down with "medieval ferocity".[121] "We took," wrote the *London Spectator*, "at least 100,000 Indian lives in the Mutiny."[122] "Mutineers" and those "suspected to be unfriendly", if captured, were summarily executed, besides being subjected to what the London *Times* correspondent described as "spiritual and mental tortures to which we have no right to resort, and which we dare not perpetrate in the face of Europe".[123] The Mahomedans were sewn in pig-skins, smeared with pork-fat before execution and their bodies burnt.[124] "Thousands were placed before a court-martial in rows after rows and condemned to be hanged or shot." In some cases, "cow's flesh was forced by spears and bayonets into the mouths of the condemned."[125]

Elementary rules of civilised warfare were put aside. Prisoners condemned to death were "mocked and tortured by ignorant privates before their execution, while educated officers looked on and approved". A favourite way of executing the mutineers was blowing them from guns "for effect" and "this became the regular punishment for *suspected* mutiny".[126] No distinction was made between combatants and non-combatants, guilty and not guilty, friend and foe. Even unoffending camp-followers and servants were not spared. In the words

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of the authors of *The History of the Indian Mutiny*, "No loyalty, no fidelity, no patient good service on the part of these good people could extinguish, for a moment, the fierce hatred which possessed our white soldiers against all those who wore the dusky livery of the East."[127] It was the war of the whites against the non-whites in which the latter could expect no quarter and got none. "Old men who had done us no harm," records Holmes in his *History of the Sepoy War*, "and helpless women with sucking infants at their breasts felt the weight of our vengeance, no less than the vilest malefactors."[128]

Within a fortnight of the outbreak of the Revolt at Meerut the lust for revenge and retaliation had reached a hysterical pitch, Nicholson, one of the "mutiny heroes", was finding the idea of simply hanging the perpetrators of such atrocities to be "maddening", and proposing to Colonel Edwardes that they should have "a Bill for the flaying alive, impalement, or burning of the murderers of the women and children at Delhi."[129] Military officers went about hunting down the supposed offenders "with as little compunction as though they had been pariah-dogs, or jackals, or vermin of a baser kind."[130] British troops burnt down villages along their route for many hundreds of miles, turning the country into a desert. There were "volunteer hanging parties" and "amateur executioners" who boasted how many they had strung up "in an artistic manner", as though for pastime, "in the form of figures of eight".[131] "Peppering away at niggers"[132] was a very pleasant pastime, "enjoyed amazingly".[133] Every day there were expeditions to burn and destroy disaffected villages. During one such trip,

> We got on board a steamer...and steamed up throwing shots right and left till we got up to the bad places, when we went to the shore...with our guns...bringing down several niggers...we fired the places right and left and the flames shot up to the heaven...fanned by the breeze....We had taken our revenge.[134]

At Allahabad, after martial law was proclaimed, "soldiers and civilians alike were holding Bloody Assize, or slaying natives without any Assize at all, regardless of sex or age."[135] Officers, as they went to sit on the court-martial, swore that they would hang their prisoners, guilty or innocent.[136] "And what was done with some show of formality . . . was as nothing" compared to "what was done without any formality at all".[137] In a book which, according to Kaye and Malleson, was "patronized by high class authorities" it was stated that in one place "for three months, eight dead-carts daily went their rounds from sunrise to sunset to take down the corpses which hung at the crossroads and market places". Six thousand beings had been thus "summarily disposed of and launched into eternity."[138]

The massacre at Cawnpore which, according to all available evidence, followed upon and was "probably inspired by the savage

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punishments inflicted at Banaras and Allahabad",[139] provided "a welcome and almost religious sanction to any act of savagery which the Government troops might perpetrate."[140] Some children who had, in innocent sport, flaunted rebel colours, were condemned to death, and not even the tears of one of the officers, composing the court, could prevent their execution.[141] In another case, two hundred and eighty-two unarmed sepoys had surrendered to Cooper, a Punjab civilian. There was no means of transporting them to a place where they could be tried formally. On the other hand, "if they were summarily executed, other regiments and intending rebels might take warning by their fate". For these reasons, Cooper resolved to put them to death.

Next morning, accordingly, he brought them out in tens and made some Sikhs shoot them. In this way two hundred and sixteen perished, but there still remained sixty-six others who had been confined in one of the bastions of the Tahsil. Expecting resistance, Cooper ordered the door to be opened. But not a sound issued from the room; forty-five of them were dead bodies lying on the floor. For, unknown to Cooper, the windows had been closely shut and the wretched prisoners had found in the bastion a real Black Hole. The remaining twenty-one were shot like their comrades.[142]

At Cawnpore and Lucknow there was a general massacre of the townsmen; all those who fell into the hands of British troops were made short work of—"sepoy or Oude villager, it mattered not—no questions were asked; his skin was black, and did not that suffice? A piece of rope, and the branch of a tree, or a rifle bullet through his brain, soon terminated the poor devil's existence."[143] At Delhi, after its capture, "the city was sacked as ruthlessly as had been Cawnpore", and all the city people found within the walls, when British troops entered, were "bayoneted on the spot", the "mutineers" having escaped.[144] Three of the Delhi Emperor's sons were shot by a British military officer and their dead bodies dragged through the streets of Delhi. The Emperor himself was deported to Rangoon where he died in prison, the last vestige of the Moghul rule disappearing with him.

By the autumn of 1858 the Rising had been crushed and its leaders killed, captured or forced to flee, but the bitterness that it left behind continued to poison Indo-British relations for many a decade to come. The 1857 Rising, wrote G. O. Trevelyan, brought about an effect on the British character, "at the recollection of which Englishmen at home have already learned to blush, but the lamentable consequences of which will be felt in India for generations yet unborn or unthought of."[145] Mr. Russel, correspondent of the London *Times*, predicted that the "evil passions" that had been generated would take many years to die out; "perhaps confidence will never be restored, and if so, our reign in India will be maintained at the cost of suffering which it is fearful to contemplate."

Lord Canning—contemptuously nicknamed "Clemency Canning"

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and a "humanity pretender", by the die-hards for his refusal to be swept off his feet—alarmed at the dementia that had possessed the British minds, wrote to the Queen: "There is a rabid and indiscriminate vindictiveness abroad even amongst many who ought to set a better example, which it is impossible to contemplate without a feeling of shame for one's countrymen." Equally worried, the Queen wrote back, "Lord Canning will easily believe how entirely the Queen shares his feelings of sorrow and indignation at the un-Christian spirit shown also to a great extent here by the public towards India in general."[146]

Following the suppression of the 1857 Rising, a bill was introduced in the British Parliament for the abolition of the East India Company's rule and for direct assumption by the Crown of the Government of India. There were some in England like Cobden who were of the view that British occupation of India was contrary to the laws of nature, which were bound to assert themselves, eventually "leaving the Hindoos to the enjoyment of the climate to which their complexion is suited".[147] It was impossible, Cobden pointed out, that a people could "permanently be used for their own obvious and conscious degradation", while the entire scheme of British Indian rule was based on the assumption that "the natives will be willing instruments of their own humiliation".[148] He, therefore, urged that on practical as well as moral grounds, India must be left to be ruled or misruled by those "who live on that side of the globe. Its people will prefer to be ruled badly—*according to our notions*—by its own colour, kith and kin, than to submit to the humiliation of being better governed by a succession of transient intruders from the Antipodes."[149]

The way in which the Rising had been put down filled Cobden with the deepest misgivings. He feared divine retribution for "the bloody deeds now being enacted", arising "from our own original aggression upon distant and unoffending people". But his Free Trade associates were differently minded. The manufacturers of Lancashire and Yorkshire looked upon "India . . . as a field of enterprises which can only be kept open to them by force".[150] Then there were the evangelicals represented by officials like John Lawrence and Herbert Edwardes. The latter looked upon the Revolt as a "divine chastisement for the sin we had committed as a nation by accepting a compromise with false religions". He wished to observe no Hindu or Muslim holidays, and to enforce the teaching of the Bible in all schools. It drew from Sir Bartle Frere a sharp rebuke: "There can be no safe rule of guidance for a Christian government different from that of a Christian individual—to do as we would be done by. And what Colonel Edwardes and J. Lawrence would do is just what we would ourselves resist to the death if attempted on us." There were besides many others who were half inclined to agree with Herbert Edwardes but saw the danger and "rather uneasily disagreed, half suspecting themselves of a too worldly compromise".[151] In vain Cobden reminded

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them that "the religious people who now tell us that we must hold India to convert it", ought to be convinced by what had passed "that sending red coats as well as black to Christianize a people is not the most likely way to insure the blessings of God on our missionary efforts".[152] His was a cry in the wilderness. The "enthusiasm for reconquering and Christianizing India"[153] and making it secure for Lancashire trade carried the day. The Company's rule was abolished and India became the property of the British Crown.

The strangest clauses of the Act by which this was effected were the financial clauses, by which the Company was guaranteed all its assets, while its liabilities were transferred to India. In 1833, at the time of the renewal of its charter, when East India Company's trade was abolished as from April 1834, the Company's territorial and other debts were charged and made chargeable upon the revenues of India, and out of India's revenue there was to be paid to the Company "a yearly dividend after the rate of £ 10 10s per annum on their capital stock". The dividend was made redeemable by Parliament after 1874 on payment to the Company of £ 200 sterling for every £ 100 of the capital stock, with further provision for redemption of the said dividend within three years of the demand in case the Company ceased to exist after 1854.[154]

On the transfer of the Company's territories to the Crown in 1858, all the debts on the Company's books, together with the accrued interest thereon at the rate originally fixed at 10.5 per cent. were made a permanent liability of India to be redeemed out of the taxes upon her people.[155] India was thus made to pay interest on the stock of a Company that had ceased to exist, even after that Company had, for two generations, realised fabulous profits on merchandise purchased almost entirely out of the revenues of India. The Crown annexed a vast empire without spending a penny, the people of India paid the purchase money and interest on it for so long as British rule lasted.

12

The institution of Public Debt was unknown in India before the advent of British rule. If Indian rulers needed finances for some public purpose they obtained loans from their wealthy subjects by mortgaging certain heads of revenue or by pawning their crown jewels. But on March 31, 1930, the year of the Declaration of Independence by the Indian National Congress, the figure for the public debt of India stood at 893.30 crores of rupees. The Congress that year appointed a Committee to go into the question of the financial obligations between Great Britain and India. The Committee consisted of two ex-Advocates General, one of whom had also been a professor of Economics in the Bombay University; and a Chartered Accountant. Its finding was that the Public Debt of

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India had no legal validity, that a strong *prima facie* case existed for its repudiation, and in fact if proper accounting were done, there would be a considerable balance of payment in India's favour.

How did this curious state of affairs arise?

Taxes raised from a people are, according to all accepted canons of taxation and public finance, supposed to belong to the people from whom they are raised to be spent in their interest. But the Company administered India's finances as if the territory they ruled over was a vast estate or plantation to be exploited for the benefit of the dividend-holders, or the mother country. Among the aims of British policy as defined by Sir Charles Metcalfe in a despatch to Marquis of Hastings (Governor-General of India, 1814-23) was "to enlarge our territories in the interior of India on every occasion of war. . ." and "to apply the net revenues of conquered countries to the maintenance of additional force, and the acquisition of additional force to the achievement of new conquests. . . ."[156] In pursuance of this policy, India was made to pay the whole cost of her conquest besides £ 32 millions for the Company's external wars, with which she really had no concern.

This still left a net surplus of £ 32 millions in 46 years ending with Queen Victoria's accession to the throne in 1837. But India did not get a farthing out of it. The whole of this amount was appropriated to pay dividends to the Company's stock-holders, and as the amount was not sufficient for the purpose, recourse was had to borrowing, which with interest on such borrowing, was made into "Public Debt" of India. By the time the Company ceased to be rulers, they had, in this way, piled up a "debt" of 70 million pounds. In equity, India owed England nothing, as England had, by then, already drawn from India a "tribute" of £ 150 millions (not calculating interest) and there was in fact a balance of £ 100 millions in India's favour out of the money that had unjustifiably been drawn from her. But, in the words of Sir George Wingate, "England was powerful and India at her feet, and little chance had the weak of enforcing payment from the strong."[157]

After the 1857 Rising, the entire cost of the campaigns to suppress it, the expenses of transporting the British troops to India, maintaining them in India, and bringing them back, together with the expenses of their "maintenance in Great Britain for six months before they sailed"[158] were—by what Sir George Wingate was constrained to characterise as an act of "unparalleled meanness"[159]—charged to India, adding a further burden of 40 million pounds to her Public Debt.

When the Crown took over from the Company, British India was less than one-half of what it became later. The expansion of British territory after the Crown took over from the Company was continued by absorbing more and more territories represented by Indian India and the border States. In the seventh decade of the nineteenth century, England in this way added 4,000 square miles to her Indian territory,

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15,000 square miles in the eighth decade; 90,000 square miles in the ninth; and 1,33,000 square miles in the tenth.[160]

According to John Morley, the Liberal Secretary of State for India, England during the nineteenth century alone, conducted 111 wars in India, "using for the most part, Indian troops".[161] India had to bear the cost of all these wars to the last penny, besides paying 90 million pounds for wars fought, during this period, for England outside of India with Indian troops.[162] "India in fact," wrote Sir George Wingate, "has been required to furnish men and means for everything in all our Asiatic wars and has never, in any instance, been paid a full equivalent for the assistance thus rendered which furnishes irrefragable proof of the one-sided and selfish character of our Indian policy."[163]

One of the provisions of the Act transferring the Company's territories to the Crown was to the effect that in future the revenues of India would not, without the consent of the Parliament, be used for any military operation carried outside India, unless it was to prevent or repel actual invasion of her territory. But in practice this principle was honoured more often in the breach than the observance and India was made to defray in the teeth of protests by the Government of India itself, the expenses of the Abyssinian War (1867), Perak Expedition (1873), Second Afghan War (1878), Expedition to Egypt (1882), Frontier Wars (1882), Burmese War (1886) and the Soukim Expedition (1896).[164]

As a result of these wars of annexation and militarist adventures of the ruling power, India's public debt rose from £ 70 millions to £ 140 millions during the first eighteen years of administration under the Crown, and to £ 224 millions between 1877 and 1900. This was due to the cost of Afghan wars of 1878 and 1897 but mainly to the construction of railways[165] by the Guaranteed Companies of the State. Thereby hangs another tale.

13

Often held up as a show-piece of British beneficent achievements in India, the Indian Railway system provides in fact an instance of one of the biggest financial swindles perpetrated on a dependency by its imperialist rulers. Unwarranted by India's pressing needs and far beyond her resources, over 22,000 miles in length of India's railways—built at a cost of 300 million pounds—were meant to serve not the interests of India, but those of British army, British trade and the commercial exploitation of India's natural resources by British imperialism. They openly discriminated against Indian manufactures, drained the country of its raw materials, and helped dump shoddy British manufactures on the Indian consumer. They lost money year after year. The losses were borne by the people, the gains were gathered by the traders.

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Practically the whole of the railway investment was European-owned. Under the Guarantee System, the Government of India guaranteed a minimum interest of 5% on their stock to the shareholders and half of the surplus profits; no account was to be taken of deficits. If the railways lost, the Government bore the loss, the guaranteed five per cent. being made up from India's revenues. Forty million pounds were taken from the general revenue to provide the guaranteed rate of interest to the shareholders. Five per cent. again represented merely the lower limit; there was no restriction on the companies realising much higher profits. The calculations were to be made on half-yearly basis, with the result that India bore all the losses of the unprofitable half-years; the companies taking good care, when there were fat days in the first half of the year, to put off all expenses till the lean days. During the second half, the loss augmented by the deferred expenditure was shifted on to Indian shoulders.

Almost all the earnings of the railways were drained out of the country. In the case of three of these railways taken together, viz. the Great Indian Peninsular (G.I.P.), the Bombay Baroda and Central India, (B.B. & C.I.), and the Madras lines, the annual proportion of the earnings actually remitted to England between 1892-97 came to 99.70 per cent. while the net loss to Government was £ 13,000,000. One of these companies, viz. the Oudh and Rohilkhand Railway (O.R.R.) had, from the date of its opening, involved the Government in a loss of £2,323,387 by way of difference between the earnings and the minimum guaranteed rate of interest. Yet its stock of £ 4,000,000 was later brought by the Government at a premium of £ 25 18s. 0¼ d. per cent. that "being the average price at which this stock had stood in the market for the previous three years".[166]

This was double robbery, as the price itself depended entirely on Government's own overgenerous guarantee given at India's expense. "The market price would have been the same, although the traffic receipts had been *nil.*"[167] Similarly, the Southern Indian ordinary stock of £3,208,508 was bought up at a premium of £969,048 11s. 2d., in spite of the fact that in the first half of 1888, the year in which that Railway was built, it had involved the Government in a loss of £1,948,599.

Guaranteed against all risk and assured in advance of a handsome profit, the Railway Companies became, in the words of William Massey, Finance Minister of India under two Viceroys, Sir John Lawrence and Lord Mayo, "the most extravagant works that were ever undertaken", and in their arrogance behaved both towards the Government and the people in an irresponsible, autocratic and overbearing manner beyond belief. Treatment meted out to third class passengers, who provided the bulk of the earnings from passenger traffic on these railways, was scandalous. All the amenities were reserved for the *Burra Sahib.*

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There were separate compartments reserved for Europeans and even for Anglo-Indians and "Eurasians". Incivility, insolence and rudeness at the hands of the railway officials was the common lot of the sons of the soil from which not even the tallest were immune. Some of these companies had the effrontery to dub the third class traffic as the "coolie class". The ill-treatment of third class passangers became one of the "national grievances" that engaged the attention of India's political leaders at the annual sessions of the Indian National Congress year after year.

14

What distinguished British regime from all previous regimes was that the British never settled down in India. They never made India their home. They came as foreigners and stayed as foreigners till the very last. The baneful consequence of this was described by Edmund Burke in a passage that has become classical:

> The Asiatic conquerors very soon abated of their ferocity, because they made the conquered country their own. They rose or fell with the rise and fall of the territory they lived in....Here their lot was finally cast; and it is the normal wish of all that their lot should not be cast in bad land....If their passion or avarice drove the Tartar lords to acts of rapacity or tyranny, there was time enough, even in the short life of man, to bring round the ill effects of the abuse of power upon the power itself. If hoards were made by violence and tyranny, they were still domestic hoards, and domestic profusion, or the rapine of a more powerful and prodigal hand, restored them to the people. With many disorders, and with few political checks upon power, nature had still fair play, the sources of acquisition were not dried up, and therefore, the trade, the manufactures, and the commerce of the country flourished. Even avarice and usury itself operated both for the preservation and the employment of national wealth....
>
> But under the English Government, all this order is reversed. The Tartar invasion was mischievous, but it is our protection that destroys India. It was their enmity, but it is our friendship. Our conquest there, after twenty years, is as crude as it was the first day...young men, boys almost, govern there....They have no more social habits with the people than if they still resided in England.... Animated with all the avarice of age, and all the impetuosity of youth, they roll in one after another; wave after wave, and there is nothing before the eyes of the natives but an endless, hopeless prospect of new flights of birds of prey and passage, with appetites continually renewing for a food that is continually wasting. Every rupee of profit made by an Englishman is lost for ever to India.[168]

Nadir Shah, during his notorious sack of Delhi, carried away a vast amount of treasure. The total in cash and kind that he plundered,

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however, did not exceed 37 million pounds and Nadir Shah came only once. But according to a recent estimate, England received from India 100 million pounds annually throughout the nineteenth century.

At the commencement of the twentieth century one-half of the revenue of India, which then stood at 44 million sterling, was drained out of India. 17.5 million pounds, "equivalent to all that is raised from the soil in all the provinces of India"[169] was debited to "Home Charges"—expenses incurred in England on India's behalf. These included interest payable on Indian debt, interest on railways and civil and military expenditures. The pay of European officers in India, virtually monopolising all the higher services, came to another 10 million pounds. In addition, a sum of several millions was sent out in the form of private remittances by European officers drawing salaries from India. "For half a century, we have gone on draining from two to three and sometimes four million pounds sterling a year from India", wrote Montgomery Martin in 1838. "So constant and accumulating a drain, even on England, would soon impoverish her; how severe then must be its effects on India, where the wages of a labourer is from twopence to threepence a day?"[170]

When taxes are raised in one country and spent in another, instead of returning in one form or another to the people from whom they are raised, the springs of wealth in the affected country dry up. When produce of the soil in one country—agricultural or animal—is sent across political and geographical frontiers to be consumed elsewhere, under conditions created by present-day international finance, coupled with the colonial system of rule, it results in a progressive deterioration of the soil in the exporting country. But a combination of the two is deadly. Both these factors had full play in India for over two centuries. In the result the Indian cultivator, unable to spend money on replenishing the soil, was driven to trade soil fertility to meet the revenue demands. Cultivation became "Rape of the Earth". The cultivator was reduced to the position of a serf attached to the soil. He was forced to sell his crops, sometimes even before they were gathered, to the agent of the foreign exporting firms against the advances received, and at prices arbitrarily fixed by the agent. The latter, taking advantage of the cultivators' indebtedness, obliged him to grow what commodities he required even in the face of falling prices in respect of those commodities. The result was that agriculture decayed, soil deteriorated. Alarmed by the spreading cancer of soil erosion, the Government later appointed a Royal Commission on Agriculture. The Commission made its post-mortem report: "Most of the area under cultivation in India. . .had reached its state of maximum impoverishment many years ago."[171]

As the eighteenth century advanced into the nineteenth, a long succession of famines such as have no parallel in the world's history in respect of either extent or mortality, swept over the country. Scarcities

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and famines were four times as numerous during the last thirty years of the nineteenth century than they were one hundred years earlier, and four times as widespread.[172] In seven centuries from the 11th to 17th, before British rule, there were nineteen famines of which there is record, and all of them except one were of local character. *But in the nineteenth century, there were as many as 31 famines—four in the first quarter, two in the second, six in the third, and eighteen in the fourth—exacting a toll of 41.5 million deaths, out of which 25,825,000 occurred in the last forty-six years alone between 1854 and 1901.*[173]

It is a significant commentary on the deepening impoverishment of the Indian masses that whereas formerly two years of drought or three years of deficient rainfall not amounting to drought were necessary to bring about a famine, at the end of the nineteenth century one year's failure of rainfall at the right time for agricultural operations, even though there was plenty of rainfall during the year for one harvest, produced a famine.[174] Huddled on an overcrowded and exhausted soil, with no subsidiary occupations to fall back upon, they succumbed "like flies" before the ravages of hunger, starvation and starvation-induced diseases. About the Madras famine of 1833, Captain Walter Campbell, who was an eye-witness, wrote: "The description in *The Siege of Corinth* of dogs gnawing human skulls is mild as compared with the scene of horror we are daily forced to witness in our morning and evening rides....It is dreadful to see what revolting food human beings may be driven to partake of. Dead dogs and horses are greedily devoured by these starving wretches."[175]

Even more appalling, though not so spectacular, was the toll exacted by various kinds of diseases and epidemics, owing to the lowered vitality of the masses. "Fever," laconically stated that official publication—*The Statistical Abstract of India*—"is a euphemism for insufficient food, scanty clothing and unfit dwellings."[176]

A peculiar feature of these famines was that they were not food famines but essentially money famines, i.e., famines due to lack of employment and purchasing power. "There has not been a single year," wrote R. C. Dutt, "when the food-supply of the country was insufficient for the people".[177] Even in the famine years, Vaughan Nash in his book *The Great Famine* showed, there was "food enough grown in India to meet the needs of each year—at a price."[178] The export of grain from the Indian ports did not stop even when millions were dying of starvation. "In one way," says Mr. J. Ramsay MacDonald in his *Awakening of India*, "railways have added to the difficulty and have widened the apparent famine area. In the first place, they are the means by which the export of Indian grain is carried on." No one, he writes, who has not been in India and seen the workings of the colossal export system that was built up under British rule, "from the great granaries at Karachee to the agencies in

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every little village having a surplus of anything to be sent away, can grasp the...nature of the export organisation."

One firm alone saps the blood of Indian life like a tropical sun, leaving dust and barrenness (it might be added, destitution) behind. A week or two after harvest, India's surplus(?) wheat and rice have passed into the hands of dealers, and when the monsoon fails, she starves. The cultivator used to have reserves. He has practically none now. He has a little money, but not much, and it is just this turning everything into cash which is the source of so much of his trouble. When famine overtook India in olden times, if the famine-stricken tract was in distress, neighbouring tracts were little affected, owing to lack of communication, thus preventing famine influences from affecting neighbouring markets. The means which relieve famine widen its influence, because scarcity in one part immediately puts up prices in another, and deepens poverty everywhere....[179]

In the year 1897-98, when due to widespread famine several hundred thousand of people died, the cultivators, according to R. C. Dutt, to meet the demand of the revenue collector were forced to sell their food-grains "which were exported to the amount of ten million sterling in that calamitous year."[180]

The blood-letting of India came to be taken for granted by her British rulers. In time, they learnt even to make a virtue of it dressed in a variety of form. In 1878, Lord Salisbury, the Secretary of State for India, famed for blurting out the truth, made a pronouncement that for sheer cynicism and callousness to human suffering stands by itself. "*As India must be bled,*" his Lordship observed, "*the lancet should be directed to the parts where the blood is congested, . . . not to those which are already feeble from the want of it.*"[181] The "congested parts", referred to, were represented by about half a dozen big cities that had, as "commission agents" of British imperialism, battened on the ruin of India's villages. They were pointed out with pride by the British authorities as a sign of India's progress, and India's favourable trade balances as a mark of her prosperity, when in fact they symbolised only her exploitation, the excess of the exports over the imports being the price she paid for "efficient British rule" and "peace of the grave" imposed by a soulless system of foreign rule on a subject race.

The Hon. John Shore, recalling seventeen years after his retirement from India, "the quiet, comfortable and settled conviction" which in those days existed in the minds of the English population of "blessings conferred on the natives of India" by the establishment of the British rule and "the storm which...thundered on the head of the unfortunate individual who should presume to question the established creed", wrote:

I soon found myself at no loss to understand the feelings of the people both towards the Government and to ourselves. It would have been astonishing

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indeed had it been otherwise. The fundamental principle of the English had been to make the whole Indian nation subservient, in every possible way, to the interests and benefits of themselves. They have been taxed to the utmost limit; every successive Province, as it has fallen into our possession, has been made a field for higher exaction; and it has always been our boast how greatly we have raised the revenue above that which the native rulers were able to extort. The Indians have been excluded from every honour, dignity or office which the lowest Englishman could be prevailed upon to accept.

Elsewhere, referring to the drain, he wrote:

The halcyon days of India are over: she has been drained of a large proportion of the wealth she once possessed, and her energies have been cramped by a sordid system of misrule to which the interests of millions have been sacrificed for the benefit of the few.[182]

This is the picture of the "four-fold ruin" that British rule in India had wrought. Of the Mahatma's mintage, the expression was first used in the Declaration of Indian Independence to highlight the problem that faced India—a problem whose very existence the rulers denied. It was very much resented at that time not only by the English apologists of British rule, but a class of Westernised Indians also, schooled in psychological subservience, though the truth of it was plain to anyone who had eyes to see. "Even as we look on," wrote the British Labour leader Hyndman, "India is becoming feebler and feebler. The very life-blood of a great multitude under our rule is slowly, yet ever faster, ebbing away."

The first generation of Indian patriots after the Rising fondly believed that the root cause of this was the "un-British" rule in India, an expression indicative at once of their frustration and their faith. Heart-break after heart-break in the following decades led, on January 26, 1930, the Indian National Congress to declare: "We hold it to be a sin before man and God to submit any longer to a rule that has caused this four-fold disaster to our country". The British rule itself, it was realised, was the cause and ending of it the only cure of the four-fold evil.

Of this struggle Gandhiji was to be the spearhead. It was given to him to perceive that having been subjugated during the Century of Wrong only by the superior armaments and organisation of the foreigner, India's struggle for independence would have to be on a plane where the foreigner's superiority in armaments did not count—the plane of non-violence. The incentives to foreign occupation had to be eliminated root and branch and a remedy found for the deepening poverty and spiritual atrophy of the masses.

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The Century of Wrong thus determined also the form that India's struggle for independence was to take. The search for her lost values led India to turn the searchlight inwards. Instead of brooding over her wrongs she set about to put her own house in order and cooperated with the conquerors to assimilate the best in their way of life and culture. This was non-violence in practice—though unconscious on her part. It served to a large extent to blunt the edge of British ruthlessness. In the phase that followed she opposed British violence with suffering consciously and cheerfully undergone. Behind this consummation lay the penance of four generations of saints, seers and statesmen whose unremitting toil prepared the way for the new era.

The sinister shadow of the Century of Wrong lengthened to South Africa. The methods evolved by the British bureaucracy in India provided the model *par excellence* that imperialists like Rhodes in South Africa consciously adopted and followed. The spectre of the encouragement that amelioration of the political status of the Indians in South Africa might give to "seditious" agitation in India haunted Sir John Robinson, the Prime Minister of Natal. Many of the makers of the Dominion at the tip of Africa were toughs passed out of the "Indian School"—Harry Smith, the Governor of Cape Colony, Sir Bartle Frere, Sir Benjamin Robertson, Earl Kitchner, and Lord Roberts, to mention no other. Earl of Elgin, Lord Ripon and Lord Ampthill had been ex-viceroys and Earl Derby Secretary of State for India before they became colonial secretaries. Their record in the Colonial Office closely followed the pattern they had set in India. It was the abysmal mass destitution engendered by the Century of Wrong in India that created the conditions for the recruitment of Indian indentured labour and gave rise to the overseas Indians question. The political servitude of the Indian emigrants pursued them like a malignant fate, even in their exile, putting upon them the stigma of inferiority and provided to the South African whites a pretext for treating them as the "helots of the Empire".

Finally, the cult of Imperialism based on a feeling of racial superiority engendered by the Century of Wrong in India, having reached the peak of its virulence in South Africa, created out of its own substance as it were, its remedy. South Africa became the nursery of Satyagraha that brought deliverance to India and yet may in the Dark Continent.

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CHAPTER III

HERALDS OF THE NEW DAWN

1

HAD THE Indian Rising of 1857 been no more than a desperate plunge into a mass holocaust by the dispossessed class, India's fate after the Revolt might not have been very different from that of the indigenous people of Kaffraria in South Africa. In that year there happened a very uncanny event in that distant land. Alarmed by the growing power of Great Britain and foreseeing their own extirpation or total suppression by the alien race, the people of West Kaffraria had recourse to a strange remedy. A prophecy had gone about among the people that on a day near at hand the world would change. The fields would teem with more cattle than a person could count. There would spring up mealies ripe for eating, and sorrow and sickness would vanish from the land; the departed leaders of the old mighty days would come back at the head of invincible Xosa armies; the white man would be pushed back into the sea, and the black man would rule South Africa. The only thing needed was faith—a faith in this resurrection, "so strong that, in proof of it, one was willing to destroy one's all"[1]. They must therefore slaughter their cattle, store no grain, nor sow; and wait for the coming millenium. Accordingly, fifty thousand men, being approximately one-third of the whole nation, Ridpath and Ellis tell us in *The Story of South Africa*, "committed suicide". They slaughtered their cattle, abstained from any cultivation of land and died like flies of starvation and disease that followed. As a result, all that part of Kaffraria next to Cape Town, was "virtually depopulated". The removal of these fierce men, we are told, "*was naturally not considered as a great loss* by the British as it lightened the process of occupation".[2]

Experience has again and again shown that suffering, by itself, has no regenerative power. But in the case of India, beneath the surface stagnation there still rolled deeply the placid waters of life. Defeated, crushed and humiliated, she, with her rich cultural past and unbroken spiritual tradition, fell back upon that silent inner reservoir of vitality for a renewal of her strength. In less than thirty years after the great Revolt had ruthlessly been put down, she was once again headed for national resurgence, which with many a setback went on gathering volume and strength till she was once again a free country.

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Prof. Arnold Toynbee, in one of his lectures in India some time back, spoke about the "contemplative way of the creative withdrawal into the spirit, without which man may not live". This was, he observed, the Buddha's way. Two thousand years after, it became the way of India's redemption also. With her vitality at a low ebb and a creeping paralysis coming over her, India in her bondage found the means of her national regeneration in her introversion where, in the words of Romain Rolland, "the fires of her threatened life had taken refuge". The resulting inner transformation manifested itself in a sudden burst of renaissance in the later half of the nineteenth century in all walks of her national life—religion, culture, art, science, literature, social reform, and finally, political activity.

The galaxy of shining lights that adorned the Indian firmament at this period, included Orientalists like Dr. Rajendralal Mitra and R. G. Bhandarker, scientists like J. C. Bose and P. C. Ray, artists like Abanindranath Tagore and Gaganendranath Tagore—the founders of the Bengal School of Art—in the North, and Ravi Varma in the South; scholars like Krishna Mohan Banerji, who edited the first Bengali Encyclopaedia in 13 volumes in 1850; and a host of poets, playwrights, artists and prose-writers. Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891), the kind-hearted agnostic humanitarian, educationist and social reformer, took up the work of social reform, where Raja Ram Mohun Roy had left it. He did more than anyone else to relieve the stark misery of the child widows of Bengal by advocating widow marriage. Michael Madhusudan Datta (1824-73), the Christian poet, and author of the celebrated epic poem *Meghanada Vadha,* created blank verse in Bengali; Dinabandhu Mitra (1829-73) made history in the indigo-cultivators' revolt by his sensational play *Nil Darpan;* and Girish Chandra Ghosh, the Bohemian actor-manager-playwright, transmuted into a devotee by the alchemy of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, made the Bengali Theatre into a great, living force for forty years.

Foremost among prose-writers was Bankim Chandra Chatterjee —popularly known as the "Walter Scott of Bengal". Father of modern Bengali prose and creator of the historical novel, he led the revolt against the craze, that had seized the Indian educated youth, as a result of their Western education, to ape English manners, dress and ways of living, and to hold in contempt their mother tongue. He lashed the denationalised set by the quip of his sarcasm and restored the despised "vernaculars" to their rightful pedestal. He also revolted against the classical tradition of the Bengali writers and, by turning popular Bengali into the medium of literary expression, made Bengali literature the heritage of the millions, instead of being the cherished possession of the learned few.

Last but not least was Rabindranath Tagore. He put India on the map by attaining world-wide fame as a thinker, philosopher, artist and man of letters, and above all as the Prophet of Humanity.

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Among the Muslims there rose poets like Hali, Ghalib and Iqbal, theological writers and historians of Islam like Ameer Ali and Shibli Numani and reformers like Syed Ahmed Khan.

This was, partly, the result of the violent political and cultural impact of the West, which awakened India to the necessity of putting her own house in order. Partly it was the fruit of cross-fertilisation of the cultures of the East and the West, following the spread of Western education. But essentially it was the result of India's vitality reacting with its native vigour to these external stimuli. No small service in this was rendered by Orientalists, Archaeologists, Epigraphists and critics like Sir William Jones and Sir Charles Wilkins, Colebrook, Wilson and Muir; Monier Williams, Paul Deussen and Max Muller; Buhler, Fleet Havell and Ananda Coomaraswamy. They revealed to India the greatness and glory of her treasures of ancient wisdom, architecture and art and made her take pride in her rich heritage.

2

Raja Ram Mohun Roy, the founder of the Brahmo Samaj, was the Morning Star of this Renaissance. Born in 1772 in a Brahmin Zemindar family in the Burdwan district of Bengal, fifteen years after the Battle of Plassey, he was the product of the combined Hindu-Muslim culture. Persian was the official language of the Moghul Court, where he was brought up. As a child he learnt Arabic in the Patna schools and read the works of Euclid and Aristotle in that language. He did not become acquainted with the works of Hindu theology till he learnt Sanskrit at Banaras between the ages of fourteen and sixteen.

At sixteen, he wrote a book in Persian, with a preface in Arabic, fiercely attacking the practice of idol worship in Hinduism, which resulted in his expulsion from his home. Thereafter for four years he wandered in the interior of India and Tibet, studying Buddhism and risking death at the hands of the Lamaist fanaticism. At his father's behest, he, then twenty, returned and was married.

There were no schools or colleges for teaching English those days. So he taught himself English, besides Hindi and Bengali, his mother tongue, and attained proficiency in Hebrew, Latin and Greek. This in order to be able to study in the original the Bible along with the *Upanishads*, the *Tantras* and Islamic Philosophy of the Sufi mystics.

In 1803, he secured an appointment under the East India Company in the Revenue Department and in 1809 became Dewan to the Collector of Rangpur District. Retiring from service in 1815, he settled down in Calcutta and threw himself heart and soul into the task of purifying Hindu faith and Hindu society that were, as a result of the growth of formalism, superstition and a host of evil social customs and practices, fast sinking into decadence.

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His indignant denunciation of the barbarous practice of the burning of widows had led to his expulsion from his family at the instance of the Brahmins in 1799. But after his father's death, he was received back among his people and inherited considerable property. The Delhi Emperor gave him the title of Raja. He had a palace and a sumptuous garden in Calcutta, where he lived in great state, giving magnificent receptions "with troupes of musicians and dancers".

Raja Ram Mohun Roy's zeal for social reform was that of a great and enlightened conservative, proud of India's past, proud of the achievements of his race, and eager to conserve all that was good and great in his ancestral religion. He courageously attacked the social abuses that had crept into Hindu society and advocated the boldest reforms, but he stuck to the fundamentals of his faith. As he wrote in his autobiographical sketch, the stand that he took in all his controversies "was not that of opposition to Brahminism but a perversion of it". Instead of renouncing Hinduism, he set about to purify it and bring it back to the pure deism of the *Upanishads* and the *Vedanta.*

The Christian missionaries' coarse, insolent tirades against Hinduism stung him. With withering irony he replied: "It seems almost natural that when one nation succeeds in conquering another, the former, though their religion may be quite ridiculous, laugh at and despise the religion and manners of those that are fallen into their power. . . . It is, therefore, not uncommon if the British missionaries, who are of the conquerors of this country, revile and mock at the religion of its natives." His publication in 1820 of *The Precepts of Jesus the Guide to Peace and Happiness*, in which he had argued in favour of separating from the other matters contained in the New Testament the moral precepts of Jesus, involved him in a controversy with the Baptist missionaries, who regarded his rejection of Christ's divinity as a heresy far outweighing his deep reverence for and appreciation of Christ's moral teachings. He lost caste with them and was dubbed a "heathen"; but Monier Williams hailed him as "perhaps the first earnest-minded investigator of the science of comparative religions that the world has produced".

Remembered as the Father of Modern India, the Prophet of Indian Nationalism and the Father of Modern Bengali prose, Raja Ram Mohun Roy was also the pioneer of public life in India. He founded two weekly journals, one in Persian and the other in Bengali, for the study of Vedic science, besides being associated with the *Bengal Herald*, a paper published in four languages—English, Persian, Bengali and Nagari. He was a great champion of the freedom of the Press. When a repressive Press Ordinance was issued in Lord Amherst's time, he engaged counsel and valiantly fought against it first in the Supreme Court and then in the Privy Council. A memorial he drew up in that connection has been described by Miss Colett, his English biographer, as "the Areopagitica of Indian History".

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The name of reforms and progressive causes with which he was identified is legion. He gave to Lord William Bentinck his fullest support in the abolition of the practice of *Suttee*, launched a crusade against polygamy, and advocated marriage of widows and intercaste marriages, friendship between Hindus and Muslims, education on modern lines and women's education, liberty of thought, legal reforms and political equality. He wrote numerous text books on Geography, Astronomy, Geometry, Grammar, etc., and founded the first modern Hindu College and free schools. A great writer in Sanskrit, Bengali, Arabic, Persian and English, he translated into Bengali and English portions from the *Vedas* and other Hindu scriptures, with his own commentaries thereon, to bring a knowledge of them within the reach of the common man. He is, besides, known as the author of a number of hymns, poems, sermons, philosophical treatises and political writings of all kinds.

In 1828 he founded the Brahmo Samaj, dedicated to the pure worship of the "Eternal, Unreachable and Immutable Being, who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe." Like many big things it had a small beginning. Soon after he had, on his retirement from service, settled in Calcutta, he established a society called Atmiya Sabha. It consisted of a group of earnest seekers who, oppressed by the spiritual aridity of the age, met from time to time to meditate on things of the spirit, going back to the *Gayatri Mantra* —the Vedic Hymn to Light—as their well-spring of inspiration. The meetings were given up in 1819. Two years later, i.e., in 1821, another Association called the Calcutta Unitarian Society was formed with both Europeans and Indians as members. This, too, did not prove a success. But it prepared the way for the Brahmo Samaj—the Church Universal.

The Church was to be closed to none, but was to serve as "a universal house of prayer, open to all men without distinction of colour, caste, nation or religion". In the gift deed the founder laid down that no religion "shall be reviled or slighted or contemptuously spoken of or alluded to". Among its aims was to inculcate "charity, morality, piety, benevolence, virtue and strengthening of all the religious persuasions and creeds". Associated with him in this as his chief supporter was Raja Dwarkanath Tagore.

An intellectual giant, Raja Ram Mohun Roy was also a spiritual genius. Though he allowed himself to be influenced by other faiths, particularly Christianity and Islam, it was not "eclecticism", that he aimed at or achieved. The doctrine, he held, "ought to rest on original synthetic analysis, sounding the depths of religious experience."[3] From his earliest childhood he showed a marked proclivity for the practice of the contemplative way. Often, in the midst of all the distractions that surrounded him, he would be found absorbed in meditation. His method was that of "the highly spiritual culture of perceiving the

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Brahman in all and . . . surrendering the self to the higher self". Self-realisation was "not to deny the existence of the world . . . but to perceive God in every bit of perception".[4] His great reputation as a thinker, statesman and ardent social reformer has, however, obscured somewhat this side of his nature.

In 1830 he went to England as the envoy of the Delhi Emperor to represent the latter's grievances to the King of Great Britain, and support before the Court of Directors the appeal he had drawn up on his behalf. While there, he met many celebrities of his time, among them William Roscoe the historian, Jeremy Bentham the philosopher, Lord Brougham and several members of the royalty. He was entertained at a public dinner by the Directors of the East India Company and was invited to give evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons at the time of the renewal of the East India Company's Charter.

A passionate lover of liberty that he was, he publicly declared, when in March, 1832, the Reform Bill was sent up to the Lords by the Commons, that he would give up his residence in the British dominion and reside in America, if the Bill was thrown out. For the struggle, as he put it, was "not merely between Reformers and Anti-Reformers, but between liberty and oppression throughout the world."[5] He felt heart-broken when the Austrian forces crushed the liberty of the people of Naples, and took it as a portent, that he would "not live to see liberty universally restored to the nations of Europe, and Asiatic nations, especially those that are European Colonies."[6]

But with all his love of liberty, he did not raise the standard of revolt against the British. Though like many others, he was, to begin with, opposed to the establishment of British rule in India, as a result of his Western contacts, he gradually came round to the view, that India for her national regeneration had much to learn from the Western nations, especially in the technological aspect of their civilisation, and the British connection provided a golden opportunity for this. Accordingly he became an ardent advocate of Western education and emphasised the need for teaching, "mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy and other branches of applied knowledge" in place of the barren scholastic education that was in vogue in his days. He implicitly believed that in another century, when India, through the spread of "Western education and enlightenment", would have attained full maturity, she would, by virtue of her natural riches and vast population, be able to present her claim to independence with a weight and authority which no power on earth would be able to resist. Much less would England then wish to resist it. It was the childhood of India's faith, when British professions of liberty and justice were accepted on their face value by even the most ardent of nationalists. The disillusioning experiences that shattered that faith came later.

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Patriot to the core, Raja Ram Mohun Roy was, however, too great a man to think in terms of nationality alone. His thinking was in terms of humanity as a whole. His was an attitude of universalism, which is echoed again and again in the teachings of the Prophets of Modern India. "It is now generally admitted," he wrote in a letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of France in 1831, "that...all mankind are one great family of which numerous nations and tribes existing are only branches. Hence enlightened men in all countries feel a wish to encourage and facilitate human intercourse...by removing...all impediments to it in order to promote the reciprocal advantage and enjoyment of the whole human race."[7] One is amazed at the breadth of his vision that enabled him to anticipate almost by a century a League of Nations for Europe, when he suggested that "the ends of constitutional government might be better attained by submitting every matter of political difference between two countries to a Congress composed of an equal number from the Parliament of each; and the decision of the majority to be acquiesced in by both nations and the chairman to be chosen by each nation alternately for one year...."[8]

He died in 1833 at Bristol. Almost the last word he uttered was the sacred syllable *Aum*.

A towering personality, Raja Ram Mohun Roy stands out in the perspective as the embodiment of the synthesis of the cultures of the East and the West which, he showed by his personal example, could be complementary instead of being antagonistic to each other. He was the first to recognise that only Nagari, or Hindi, not English, could be India's *lingua franca*. He symbolised the heights that India might have scaled if Western knowledge and culture had come to her in the natural course by a process of assimilation through the medium of the mother tongue, instead of coming, as they did, as an adjunct to foreign rule and through the foreign medium, by an uprooting of the people from their cultural past.

3

An aristocrat in mind and soul like Raja Ram Mohun Roy, whom he succeeded as the leader of the Brahmo Samaj, Debendranath Tagore, father of the Poet Rabindranath Tagore, was a deeply religious soul. It was, as he tells us, the perusal of a torn leaf of a book containing the first verse of *Ishopanishad*, blown to his feet by the wind, that led him to Brahmoism. But he could not accept the Upanishadic doctrine of the identity of the soul and the Over Soul. He rejected the authority of the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* on which the Brahmo faith had hitherto rested, and insisted that reason and conscience should be the supreme authority. "The pure heart filled with the light of intuitive knowledge" alone, he declared, was the infallible authority. Therefore, only those

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texts of the *Upanishads*, which accorded with the heart, should be accepted. This was his doctrine of intuition.

In other respects, Debendranath kept up Raja Ram Mohun Roy's tradition. Raja Ram Mohun Roy's approach to the question of reform had been that of a patriot and a practical statesman. The champion of freedom and lover of humanity in him never lost sight of the pragmatic aspect of social reform. Take, for instance, his observations on the caste system:

"I regret to say that the present system of religion adhered to by the Hindus is not well calculated to promote their political interest. The distinction of castes, introducing innumerable divisions and sub-divisions among them, has entirely deprived them of patriotic feeling, and the multitude of religious rites and ceremonies and the laws of purification have totally disqualified them from undertaking any difficult enterprise....It is, I think, necessary that some change should take place in their religion at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort."[9]

He was out to reform Hinduism so that purged of its evils, it might re-emerge unified and strengthened, once again to play its rightful role in the national regeneration. He never contemplated any drastic changes in Hindu religion or a radical reconstruction of Hindu society, which would only add one more sect to the innumerable sects already existing in India. His zeal for reform was tempered with caution. Debendranath shared fully Raja Ram Mohun Roy's strong temperamental dislike to compulsion in social reform. But after him things changed.

Highly impulsive, Keshub Chunder Sen (1838-84), destined to be the next leader of the Brahmo Samaj, went all out for a root-and-branch reform of Hinduism and gave to it a marked Christian colouring. In 1864, he broke away from the parent organisation that Raja Ram Mohun Roy had founded as he felt that in the matter of reform, particularly in regard to inter-caste marriage and the marriage of widows, the Samaj under Debendranath Tagore did not go far enough. Two years later he founded the Nava Vidhan or the Church of New Dispensation which, many felt, left a very thin partition between orthodox Christianity and Brahmoism. He hailed Christ not only as the Prince of Prophets but "the Second Person of the Trinity; the Incarnate Son of God and... the fulfilment of Hinduism". Though he did not accept Christ as an incarnation of God, he adopted the Cross as a symbol of sacrifice to stimulate his followers to a life of self-denial, and even adopted a number of rituals and ceremonials from Christianity, like Baptism, Lord's Supper and Pilgrimages to the Saints. To deepen the religious life of his Church he introduced into it several Vaishnavite forms of Bhakti, including street singing in the manner of the revivalists, to the accompaniment of musical instruments — *Ek-tara* (single-stringed guitar) and *Khola* (two-faced tabor) — used by the followers

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of Shri Chaitanya of Bengal. Under the influence of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, he began to lay more and more emphasis on meditation, yoga and asceticism. He prepared for use in his Church service, an anthology of texts culled from the scriptures of various religions—Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Chinese.

His contact with the image-worshipping Hindu masses, during a tour he undertook in 1873, convinced him that their gods were "at bottom nothing but the names of different attributes of the one God", and their idolatry "nothing but the worship of divine attributes". As a result, he moved away from his earlier implacable opposition to image-worship in all forms and declared that "to believe in an undivided Deity without reference to the aspects of His nature is to believe in an abstract God, and it would lead us to practical rationalism and infidelity."[10]

Marriage, contrary to the Brahmo Samaj principles, of his daughter to the Prince of Cooch-Behar State in 1878, according to the orthodox Hindu rites when both of them were under age, caused another schism in the Brahmo Samaj. His Christian proclivities, on the other hand, widened the gulf between Brahmoism and Hinduism. The rationalism of Brahmo Samaj appealed only to the few. Its influence was confined largely to the Western-educated intellectual middle class, and when its leadership passed into the hands of the Westernised set, it ceased to be a popular force.

But Maharshi Debendranath's *tapasya* (penance) and knowledge saved it from the danger of severing its ties with Hinduism from which it drew its sap. In the field of social reform, it did a tremendous lot of good. It helped to liberalise and rationalise Hinduism and infused a social sense in Hindu society. In Gandhiji's words, Brahmo Samaj "liberated Reason and left room enough for Faith",[11] it cultivated a toleration for other faiths and tried to keep the fountain source of religion pure by holding up the ideal of pure worship of the Supreme Being.

An offshoot of Brahmo Samaj was Prarthana Samaj. As early as 1849, an association known as Paramahansa Sabha was formed in Bombay. Among its declared objects was the breaking of caste. It was a secret organisation, and it was suspected that some of its members had joined it to indulge in forbidden foods surreptitiously rather than from any zeal for reform. The secret was exposed in 1860. The association then broke up. But in 1864, when Keshub Chunder Sen visited Bombay, some of the more earnest members of the defunct Sabha gathered together and decided to form a new association for the purpose of introducing such reforms as marriage of widows, abolition of child-marriage, disapproval of caste and propagation of women's education. To distinguish itself from the Brahmo Samaj, with its unseemly dissensions and schisms, the Samaj adopted the name "Prarthana Samaj".

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The total membership of all the three Brahmo Samajes was never large. But the contribution of Brahmoism is not to be measured by the number of its adherents. Among those who found inspiration in the Brahmo Samaj were some of India's greatest nationalist leaders—Surendranath Banerjee, B. C. Pal, C. R. Das, and the Tagores in Bengal; and K. Natarajan, N. G. Chandavarkar, Justice Ranade and Gopal Krishna Gokhale—products of Prarthana Samaj—in Bombay.

4

In marked contrast with the reformist Brahmo Samaj was the Arya Samaj—the church-militant within the Hindu fold—being to Hinduism what Protestantism is to the Roman Catholic church. Founded by Swami Dayananda Saraswati, it was a revivalist movement, with return to the pure ancient Vedic faith, culture and institutions as its goal.

The country was covered with a network of Christian schools, colleges, and missionary agencies and the Christian missionaries' proselytising assault on Hinduism was in full swing. The Indian intelligentsia were beginning to lose faith in themselves, their religion and the genius of their race. Brahmo Samaj, weakened by two successive schisms within the space of one generation and threatened with complete absorption into Christianity, had failed to stir the popular imagination. Indian public opinion felt no confidence in it.

Swami Dayananda with his generation had noted with deep inner anguish the onslaught on the one hand of superficial European rationalism and, on the other, of Christianity which, coming as a hand-maid of Western Imperialism, had disrupted their national solidarity, bred scepticism and schism when it entered a family, and undermined their faith in their own religion without providing an adequate substitute for it. The Arya Samaj movement was an answer to this double challenge —internal and external. It represented India's instinct of self-preservation in revolt.

Before he became a *Sannyasin*, Swami Dayananda bore the name Mula Shanker. He was born in 1824 in Morvi State in Kathiawad in an orthodox Brahmin family, and in his early days was a devout worshipper of Shiva. At the age of fourteen he experienced a religious crisis, when, commanded by his father, he participated in a vigil and a fast in a Shiva Temple on the Shivaratri night. There, when the other devotees had fallen asleep, the young lad, trying conscientiously to keep his eye-lids open by dashing water against them, was shocked to find mice frolicking over the image of the deity. Surely, it could be no true god, he felt within himself, that could not even keep the mice away. The explanations given by his father to resolve his doubts failed to satisfy him. Going home, he broke his fast, and went to sleep. The death of his sister and his uncle, some time after, awakened in him a passionate

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longing to attain *mukti* or freedom from the cycle of birth and death. His father had arranged a marriage for him. To escape it, he slipped away from home, took the vow of celibacy, practised yoga, and for years wandered all over the country in quest of *true* knowledge. At Muttra he found in Vrijananda, an irascible ascetic, his ideal teacher, who taught him the *Vedas*, and made him take a vow to pledge his life to the dissemination of truth, waging an incessant and uncompromising war on the falsehood of Puranic Hinduism, and restoring the true Vedic teaching. For the next twelve years, he toured all over the country challenging in debate over various theological issues the noted pundits of his day.

In 1872 he visited Calcutta, where he met Maharshi Debendranath Tagore and Keshub Chunder Sen, the leaders of the Brahmo Samaj. They were impressed by his learning and his enlightened views on image worship, but could not accept his doctrine of the infallibility of the *Vedas* and transmigration of the soul. Soon they parted company. The meeting, however, permanently effected Swami Dayananda. He had hitherto used Sanskrit exclusively as his medium. Under Keshub Chunder Sen's advice, he adopted Hindi, the popular language, for the propagation of his mission. Two years later, he published his *magnum opus*, *Satyartha Prakash*, the Arya Samajists' canon, which is said to lay down a complete code of conduct, based on Vedic authority, for the whole life of man from conception to cremation. In the following year, he founded the Arya Samaj.

During 1878, some correspondence passed between him and the leaders of the Theosophical movement, Madame Blavatsky and Col. Olcott. In the course of it they proposed to him that the Theosophical Society should be united with the Arya Samaj and the two should concert efforts in the "holy work" in which the Swami was engaged. At first he consented, but difference arose over the esoteric and occult part of the Theosophic creed, and after a two years' trial the "political alliance" on the basis of vindication of the *Vedas* against the rising tide of Christianity was given up. In October, 1883, at the age of fifty-nine, he died, it is believed, through poisoning by a concubine of a Maharaja, whose immoral life he had criticised.

The language of his polemics was not always temperate. He believed in paying his adversary in his own coin; and his criticism was not always well-informed, owing partly perhaps to his lack of knowledge of the non-Sanskritic languages. Not unoften it betrayed a narrowness and rigidity of outlook which was redeemed only by the burning sincerity behind it. He was, in the words of Romain Rolland, "a Luther fighting against his own misled and misguided Church of Rome. He had no pity for any of his fellow countrymen, past or present, who had contributed in any way to the thousand year decadence of India, at one time the mistress of the world. He was a ruthless critic of all who, according to him, had falsified or profaned the true Vedic religion."[12] *Koran* or *Puran* made

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no difference to him. He was unsparing in his criticism of what he considered as "errors"—whether of Puranic Hinduism, Jaina, Buddhist, or the Vedantic school of thought, or of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, or any other religion of the world. To quote Romain Rolland once more, he "hurled the defiance of India against her invaders". He challenged the "religious imperialism" of the Christian missionaries and "declared war on Christianity, and his heavy massive sword cleft it asunder with scant reference to the scope or exactitude of his blows."[13] His was a proselytising movement with all the strength and weakness of such a movement.

An epoch-making service that he rendered to Hindu Society was to throw open to one and all the wells of ancient spiritual knowledge by translating and writing in the vernacular of the people commentaries on the *Vedas*, whose study had previously been prohibited by the orthodox Brahmins to the so-called "low castes". Not only this, he insisted that study and spread of the *Vedas* was the duty of every Arya.

The Aryas, according to him, were to be not a caste nor a sect but a fellowship of all men of "superior principles" irrespective of nationality or colour. He postulated equal justice for all men and all nations, fought for equality of sexes, repudiated the caste system on purely hereditory basis, and recognised only professions or guilds suited to the inherited and natural aptitudes of men in society. Religion was to have no part in these divisions but only the service of society (or the State) which would assess the fitness for the task to be performed by each. Everybody, no matter to what class he belonged, should have the freedom and opportunity to acquire as much knowledge as would enable him to rise to the full height of his stature and ability. He fought with a passion seldom equalled against the various abuses from which the women suffered, and the inferior status which custom had assigned to them in society. He reminded them that in the heroic age they occupied in the home and in society a position "at least equal to men". They should, therefore, have the right to equal education, and "supreme control in marriage, over household matters, including the finances".[14] He courageously pressed for equal rights in marriage for man and woman, and though he regarded marriage as a sacrament and, therefore, indissoluble, he advocated marriage of widows. No one before him had fought more courageously and uncompromisingly for eradication, root-and-branch, of untouchability and complete absorption of the "untouchables" in the Hindu fold.

The Arya Samaj believes in the infallible authority of the *Vedas*, which it regards as an embodiment of the Revealed Word, and the source of all knowledge not only spiritual but also scientific—an assertion that has aroused much controversy.

Besides the belief in the infallibility of the *Vedas*, the Arya Samaj insists on the doctrines of Karma (the law of causality), and rebirth;

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efficacy of the *homas* (the ritual of the sacrificial fire); revival of *Ashram Dharma* or organisation of man's life according to the four natural divisions as prescribed in the *Vedas*; and condemns in unequivocal terms idolatry, animal sacrifice, ancestor worship, pilgrimages, priest-craft, offerings in temples, and child marriages, which it maintains have no Vedic sanction.

The Arya Samaj rendered a yeoman's service especially in Northern India in ridding popular Hinduism of some of its grosser superstitions and by encouraging the study of Sanskrit. In philanthropic activities, such as founding and running of orphanages, widows' homes, workshops for boys and girls, and voluntary service organisations at the time of public calamities the Arya Samaj led the way, anticipating in this respect the Ramakrishna Mission. The Gurukul University at Hardwar, founded by Lala Munshi Ram (afterwards Swami Shraddhanand), was a bold effort to revive the ancient forest-hermitage system of education on Vedic lines. It became the prototype of the Ashramas and national educational institutions that later played such an important role in India's nationalist revival. Though officially the Arya Samaj kept aloof from politics, it, by transfusing into the languid body of India somewhat of, what Romain Rolland has called, its founder's "own formidable energy, his certainty and his lion's blood", became an important factor in India's national regeneration and, whether the Swamiji intended it or not, "prepared the way in 1905 for the revolt of Bengal".[15] Two of its leaders, Lala Lajpat Rai, popularly known as the Lion of the Punjab, and Swami Shraddhanand, played a vital role in India's non-violent freedom struggle.

5

If Brahmo Samaj symbolised the East turning to the West for inspiration, and the Arya Samaj the East's revolt against the West, the international association known as Theosophical Society, founded by Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott, symbolised the West turning to the East for knowledge and wisdom.

In 1874, a Russian lady reputed to possess extraordinary occult powers, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, popularly known as Madame Blavatsky, visited the United States of America at the bidding, it was claimed, of " a great Hierarchy of Adepts or Masters, living unseen somewhere in Tibet", to create interest in "the truths of Ancient Wisdom". There she met Col. Olcott, who was likewise interested in spiritualism and occult phenomena. At his suggestion the Theosophical Society was started in America in 1875 with Col. Olcott as its first President and Madame Blavatsky as the corresponding Secretary. Among its objects was stated to be "to teach and expect its fellows to personally exemplify the highest morality and religious aspiration, to oppose the

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materialism of science . . . to counteract . . . efforts of Missionaries to delude the so-called 'Heathens and Pagans' . . . ; to disseminate a knowledge of the sublime teachings of that pure esoteric system . . . mirrored in the oldest *Vedas*, Zoroaster and Confucius; finally and chiefly to aid in the institution of a Brotherhood of Humanity, wherein all good and pure men of every race, shall recognize each other as the equal effects . . . of one Universal, Infinite and Everlasting Cause."[16]

A review of Madame Blavatsky's book *The Secret Doctrine* written in 1887, which she was asked to do for the *Review of Reviews*, edited by W. T. Stead, brought Mrs. Annie Besant into the Theosophical Movement. She had separated from her husband the Rev. Frank Besant in 1873. With Charles Bradlaugh she had been the stormy petrel of free thought, and a socialist agitator and member of the Fabian Society, together with the Webbs and George Bernard Shaw, in the eighteen eighties. On Col. Olcott's death in 1907, she succeeded him as the President of the Theosophical Society and it was under her leadership chiefly that the Theosophical Movement in India took root.

The expression Theosophy is an exact translation of the well-known Sanskrit term *Brahmavidya* or the "knowledge of the Absolute". Among the more important of the teachings of the Theosophical Society are "the unity of Godhead, corresponding to the Vedantic conception of the Absolute; the immortality of the soul (and) the realization of universal brotherhood."[17] It holds that humanity is one and indivisible. Therefore,

> The world needs no sectarian church, whether of Buddha, Jesus, Mahomet, Swedenborg, Calvin or any other. There being but one truth, man requires but one church—the temple of God within us, walled in by matter but penetrable by any one who can find the way; *the pure in heart shall see God.*[18]

Similarly, religion in its true sense, it holds, is not a particular set of dogmas but "that which binds not only all Men but also all Beings and all things in the entire universe into one grand whole".[19] Besides the universal brotherhood of man the Theosophical Society subscribes to the doctrines of Karma, Reincarnation and Rebirth; and holds that the soul being an "emanation from the Absolute" shares with it its divinity.

The Theosophical Movement stood up as the champion of India's ancient faiths and culture at a time when, in the words of a noted Christian missionary writer, they were "most unjustly deprecated and unmercifully condemned by missionaries, by Europeans in general and even by some Hindus." The Indian intelligentsia had developed a strong inferiority complex. They had forgotten their own literature, were contemptuous of their past, and had lost all hope for the future. They aped English manners, filled their homes with English furniture and were lost to all national spirit. The Theosophical Movement helped to restore to them their lost self-respect, pride in themselves, their traditions

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and their past, and to reawaken the urge once again to take their place among the greatest nations of the world. It laboured to popularise in Europe, and America, a number of the best oriental scriptures like the *Upanishads* and the *Gita* and taught the Western nations to sympathise with the people of the Orient as their brothers, worthy of their respect. No wonder Sir Valentine Chirol saw in the activities of the Theosophical Society the seeds of "Indian Unrest". Referring to Dr. Annie Besant's work, he wrote:

> Is it surprising that Hindus should turn their backs upon our civilisation when a European of highly-trained intellectual power and with an extraordinary gift of eloquence comes and tells them that it is they who possessed the key to supreme wisdom, that their gods, their philosophy, their morality are on a higher plane of thought than the West has ever reached?[20]

Unlike the other two movements that preceded and the Ramakrishna Movement that followed it, the Theosophical Society did not disown politics but identified itself with the Indian struggle for independence and gained for it numerous sympathisers and active associates from among the people of the West. It was to the common background of religious and philosophical thinking provided by Theosophy that Gandhiji owed several of his English friendships during his student days in England and some of his most trusted associates and colleagues in the South African Satyagraha struggle.

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CHAPTER IV

THE PATHFINDERS

1

THE FOUNDERS of all the aforementioned movements were men of scholarship and learning. They bore the stamp of culture and breeding of the aristocracy, or of the upper middle class from which they came. A coin of different mintage altogether was the founder of the movement named after him that followed. A contemporary of Keshub Chunder Sen and Swami Dayananda, Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, as he came to be known later, was a simple, unlettered, plebian soul—a man of the masses and from the masses. With no pretension to any learning, he was yet a spiritual genius, such as India has been blessed with through the ages. To him came men of all descriptions, from all walks of life and found in him something that answered their inner needs. Savants like Dr. Brojendra Nath Seal, Chancellor of an Indian University, and intellectual giants like Keshub Chunder Sen and Pratap Chandra Mazumdar, found satisfying food for their intellect in his discourses; men of letters and men of the world like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the great Bengali novelist, and Girish Chandra Ghosh, sought his counsel while a philanthropist and a man of renunciation like Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, though a professed agnostic, paid him his soul's homage. Also came to him the common folk to obtain healing balm for their hidden inner wounds, which his piercing gaze unerringly divined. He turned away no one and gave to all alike his sympathy, his enlightenment and that "strange power of soul", about which it was said that even when he did not speak a word, it gripped "with the force of a tiger" the hearts of his visitors and left them transformed for days.

He exercised a strange, incomprehensible power over men's heart and intellect. "What is there in common between him and me?" asks one of them, P. C. Mazumdar, the leading Brahmo Samaj leader and devoted disciple of Keshub Chunder Sen. "I, a Europeanised, civilised, self-centered, semi-sceptical, so-called educated reasoner, and he, a poor, illiterate, unpolished, half-idolatrous, friendless Hindu devotee? Why should I sit long hours to attend to him, I who have listened to Disraeli and Fawcett, Stanley and Max Muller. . . . And it is not I only, but dozens like me who do the same." And the answer he gives is that it is his religion that is his chief recommendation. But there lies the rub—his religion itself is a puzzle. "He worships Shiva, he worships Kali, he

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worships Rama, he worships Krishna, and is a confirmed advocate of Vedantic doctrines. . . . He is an idolater, yet is a faithful and most devoted meditator of the perfections of the One formless, infinite Deity." The final solution to the riddle that he finds is: "His religion means ecstasy, his worship means transcendental insight, his whole nature burns day and night with a permanent fire and fever of a strange faith and feeling."[1]

Shri Ramakrishna wrote no books, propounded no new truths, claimed no originality for his teachings. But what he taught bore the stamp of realisation. He spoke as one with authority. Old truths glowed with a new meaning and light on his lips. The men of learning and scholarship, who came to him, found that he was "infinitely more master" than they even on the intellectual plane. He had the faculty of clothing the most abstruse of philosophical truths in the simplest language that even a child could understand. Theological controversies of ages are often found summed up in a simple parable or image of his which looks like the last word on the subject.

His was the intuitive wisdom of an illumined soul that has touched the Supreme. Gifted with an insight, amounting almost to a sixth sense, he could read the souls of the people who came to him as readily as if they were in a glass case, and at the first casual glance discover their latent capabilities, virtues and weaknesses, of which they themselves were often unaware. He never judged anyone but identified himself with all those who came to him, made their hidden desires and sorrows his own and brought to bear a broad, tolerant sympathy upon the problem of each. In the midst of a crowd, he would search out an afflicted soul that was hiding from him, put his finger on his doubt, anxiety, or secret wound and just by a word, a smile, or the touch of his hand, communicate "a nameless peace, a happiness for which men yearned".[2]

He saw the malady that was afflicting the educated class—the unbelief and rank materialism that was eating into their vitals, on the one hand, and much talk about religion without religious experience, on the other. As Gandhiji put it, he came to them as a "living embodiment of godliness". What he presented to them was not a set of dry intellectual propositions, or an inherited tradition but "pages from the Book of Life . . . revelations of his own experiences". To quote Gandhiji once again, "In this age of scepticism Ramakrishna presents an example of a bright and living faith which gives solace to thousands of men and women who would otherwise have remained without spiritual light."[3]

2

Born in a family of poor Brahmin priests in 1836, in Kamarpukur, an out of the way village in the Hooghly district of Bengal, Shri

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Ramakrishna Paramahansa—Gadadhar, as his parents named him—was an extremely gifted child, with a high degree of aesthetic sensitivity. Throughout his life, he was subject to trances, the earliest occurring when he was barely seven years old. For some time he assisted his brother in discharging the duties of a family priest in Calcutta. Three years later, in 1855, when a rich Bengali lady built a temple in Dakshineswar, the two brothers became temple priests. In the following year, on the death of his elder brother, Ramakrishna took his place. He was then twenty.

There is a school in Hinduism known as Tantra or Shakta, which holds that the world is not to be discarded as suffering and imperfection, but embraced as an unending manifestation of the dynamic aspect of the divine. It is one of the basic principles of this school that man in general must rise through and by means of nature, not by the rejection of nature. "As one falls onto the ground, so one must lift oneself by the aid of the ground."[4] It is no use trying vainly to abolish the animal instincts of man, when they can, by means of proper techniques, be harnessed to activate man's being and lead it on to the upward path. The followers of this school worship Shakti or Kali, the Universal Mother, embodying the principle of energy and time in nature as against Purusha—the male principle that stands for passivity and eternity. By virtue of its profound psychological insight and bold spiritual techniques, this school has been hailed by eminent western psychologists like Jung as a treasure trove of ready-made formulas awaiting the serious study of students of modern analytical psychology.

The conception of God as Mother is not confined to Hinduism. It is common to many religions in the world, including Christianity. The parents of Shri Ramakrishna, like all Shaktas, were worshippers of Kali, the World Creatrix, "whose play is this universe of names and forms". And it was to Kali the dark-skinned goddess, combining in herself both the terrible and the benign aspects of creation, that the temple, where Shri Ramakrishna served as priest, was dedicated.

The next twelve years of Shri Ramakrishna's life were passed on the precincts of this temple in a ceaseless, passionate quest for God, characterised by an astonishing tenacity and singleness of purpose. It was a strange bizarre world, with a burning ground in its vicinity and a famous temple and a sacred river with a bathing *ghat* as its nucleus, in which was reflected the entire panorama of the search for the Supreme, which constitutes the core of the Hindu faith with its multi-coloured spectrum of religious experiences, and seekers and experiments of all kinds. His terrible earnestness consumed him like an all-devouring flame. The more engrossed he became in the performance of his routine duties as the Mother's servitor, the more insistent became the questioning in his heart: "Is she a true Mother, or a fiction of the mind?" If She was real, then why did She not manifest Herself to him? Meditating by the hour at midnight, crying out in an agony because the Mother had not revealed

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Herself to him as a living reality, he finally reached a stage when, unable to bear the agony of uncertainty and suspense any longer, he decided to put an end to his life. He was about to act upon his mad impulse, when a blinding flash of illumination engulfed him. The temple building, the river and the bathing *ghat*, with its multitudinous throng of pilgrims, were all blotted out. It seemed as if nothing existed any more. Instead

> I saw an ocean of Spirit, boundless, dazzling. In whatever direction I turned, great luminous waves were rising. They bore down upon me with a loud roar, as if to swallow me up. In an instant they were upon me. They broke over me, they engulfed me. I was suffocated. I lost consciousness and I fell. How I passed that day and the next I know not. Round me rolled an ocean of ineffable joy. And in the depths of my being I was conscious of the presence of the Divine Mother.

Thereafter, to making that vision steady and permanent, all his energies were bent. Under the direction of a Brahmin nun, who, led by an intuitive vision, sought him out, and entered into a mother-son relationship with him, he began drastically to discipline himself. She was an adept in *Tantra*. No one knew her name. To Ramakrishna it could not have even occurred to discover it. Some of the exercises she put him through were afterwards described by him to be of so dangerous a character that they could easily lead to the mental derangement or moral degradation of the striver. But by dint of intense meditation and prayer he came out of them unscathed and persevered till in the end the vision of the Mother became a constant presence to him, waking or sleeping. Everything was contained in the Universal Mother; She permeated all things, and transformed them all.

An unwearied experimenter in religion, he was not satisfied with one system of discipline alone. In quick succession he went through various Vaishnava forms of *Sadhana* to realise the Personal God in His various forms. He had the protean faculty of identifying himself completely with whatever object he meditated upon, his plastic imagination clothing in a concrete form the abstract conceptions that filled his mind.

Having experienced Him in all the forms known in Hindu religion, he set about, under the guidance of an Advaitist adept, to experience Him in His formless, non-dual aspect. This was Totapuri, an itinerant monk from the Punjab. He was very tall and robust, with a mind and constitution of iron. Resolute and indestructible like a rock, he had not known illness. Suffering and sorrow he regarded with smiling contempt. It could never have occurred to him that anything—physical danger, temptation or infirmity of the flesh—could have any power over his sovereign will. Before he took to a wandering life, he was the supreme head of a monastery of seven hundred monks. He went about absolutely naked, and it was as "the naked one" that Shri Ramakrishna always referred to him.

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Brahman, he explained to Shri Ramakrishna, is the only Reality—ever-pure, ever-illumined, ever-free, beyond the limits of time, space, and causation. "When a seeker is merged in the beatitude of *Samadhi*, he does not perceive time and space, or name and form. . . . Pierce through the maze of name and form and rush out of it like a lion. . . . You will then find . . . this puny ego merging in the cosmic consciousness. You will realise your identity with *Brahman*, the Existence-Knowledge-Bliss absolute."

After initiation, the "naked one", Shri Ramakrishna afterwards described, asked him to withdraw the mind "completely from all objects and dive into the Atman. I had", to quote Shri Ramakrishna's own words,

> no difficulty in withdrawing the mind from all other objects except one, the all too familiar form of the Blissful Mother....Again and again I tried... but every time the Mother's form stood in the way. In despair I said to the naked one, 'It is hopeless. I cannot raise my mind to the unconditioned state and come face to face with the Atman!' He grew excited and said, 'What! you can't do it! But you have to!'...Finding a piece of glass he took it up and pressing the point between my eye-brows, said, 'Concentrate the mind on this point'. Then with a stern determination I again sat to meditate, and as soon as the gracious form of the Divine Mother appeared before me, I used my discrimination as a sword and with it clove it in twain. There remained no more obstruction to my mind.... I was lost in *Samadhi*.

Hardly had he crossed the threshold of relative existence when he passed into the unconditioned state. The universe was extinguished, time was swallowed up in eternity, even space itself melted away. Everything was reduced to ideas. "For a while their shadowy forms floated in the dim background of the mind. Only the faint consciousness of Ego ticked on in dull monotony. Presently that too stopped. The soul was lost in Self. Dualism was blotted out. Knowledge, knower and known dissolved in the ocean of eternal consciousness. Birth, death and causation lost their meaning. What remained was pure Existence, supreme ever-lasting Bliss." Beyond word, beyond thought, he had attained *Brahman*.

His teacher could scarcely believe his eyes. This man had realised in one day what it had taken him forty years of hard labour to attain. For three days and three nights he remained in that state of complete absorption in *Brahman*—the Formless, the Absolute—the body, motionless and rigid as a corpse, outwardly showing no sign of life—no respiration, no heart beat—but radiating "the sovereign serenity of the spirit which has reached the end of all knowledge".[5]

Normally, under the rule of his order, Totapuri was not supposed to stay at any place for more than three days, but he stayed at Dakshineswar for eleven months. Before the end, their respective roles of teacher and pupil were reversed. The teacher learnt from his God-intoxicated

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pupil that the Impersonal God and the Personal God, the Divine Mother and *Brahman* are one and the same Being, two aspects of the same Reality; it is impossible to conceive the one without the other.

After Totapuri had left, Shri Ramakrishna again passed into the unconditioned state and remained more or less continuously for six months completely unconscious of his body or its requirements. Only the kind ministrations of a monk of Dakshineshwar prevented the body from disintegrating. When he returned from that state to the threshold of relative consciousness it was with his psychic sensitivity so heightened as a result of his deep dive into the Supreme, and his sense of oneness with all life so intensified that he howled with physical pain when he saw two boatmen quarrelling angrily, and sitting by a blazing fire shivered, when a poor beggar, of whose presence he could not have been physically aware, was shivering in the cold outside.

Attracted by the *Sadhana* of a Muslim Sufi, he next followed for a while the Islamic, and then the Christian way. In the end he was rewarded with a vision of the Prophet of Islam and of Jesus Christ respectively. A common feature of all these spiritual excursions was complete transformation of his conduct in harmony with the way with which he was for the time being identified to the exclusion of his own. Thus, when he was practising the Islamic *Sadhana*, he dressed and lived like a Muslim, forgetting completely even Kali, the Mother, and worshipped the image of Christ and Mary, when he was engaged in the practice of the Christian way, the end in every case always being the dissolution and absorption of the vision in the nameless, formless, *Brahman*.

By whatever path he travelled—whether of non-dualistic Hinduism, Islam or Christianity, or any of the different Hindu sects—it invariably led him back to the Ocean of the Infinite, the God without attributes. "The substance is One under different names," he declared, "and every one is seeking the same Substance; nothing but climate, temperament and name vary. Let each man follow his own path. If he sincerely and ardently wishes to know God, . . . he will surely realise Him."[6]

A series of journeys that he undertook in 1868-70, when a famine was ravaging the land through which he passed, discovered to him the face of human suffering. The realisation came to him that the God within him could not be satisfied with personal salvation, but required of him unwearied love and service of mankind. To this end he began to gather round him a band of disciples, dedicated to the service of God incarnated in suffering humanity. Foremost among them was Narendranath Datta, afterwards Swami Vivekananda. To communicate to them the wonders of God that he had seen, and to fit them out for their mission became his all-absorbing passion.

In handling the disciples he showed, for a mystic, a remarkable tact and insight. Refusing to lay down *ex cathedra* the law for them he

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helped them unawares to land by their own power. He did not try to force them into a uniform pattern of conformity, but encouraged each to develop in his own way. Like the warm sunshine playing around all the trees in a grove, he helped each nature to grow "in its own place according to the laws of its own being and put forth its own blossoms and fruit". Alert and observant always, he allowed no idleness, uncleanliness or disorder in his disciples and never failed to recall them to the humble domestic details of everyday life. He varied his method to suit the individuality, temperament and range of vision of each, counselling energy to one, and renunciation to another; scolding a timid disciple for not knowing how to defend himself, while counselling to still another, who was of an impulsive and vehement nature, cultivation of a mild and forgiving spirit even in the face of injury. Very characteristic was his advice to a dreamy disciple who was inclined to let his excessive goodness out-run his common sense: "A devotee ought not to be a fool."

He died in 1886 of cancer of the throat. His unruffled serenity in the face of his terrible physical agony filled with amazement all those who saw him—his doctors not the least. When his throat was parched with thirst, because he could not swallow even a drop of water, some one said to him, "Why do not you pray to the Mother to enable you to drink water?" With childlike simplicity he replied, "All right, I shall try", and went into a trance to consult the Mother. He came out of his trance with a radiant smile on his face. Asked about it he said, Mother had told him, "I have millions of mouths. Why do you need this particular mouth to feed you?" His physical condition remained unchanged but there was not even murmur of complaint after that. "Only the body suffers," he would say, "when the spirit is united in God, it can feel no pain." And again, "Let the body and its sufferings occupy themselves with each other. Thou, my spirit, remain in bliss. Now I and my Divine Mother are one for ever."

3

St. Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians has spoken of the fruits of the spirit as "love, joy, peace, long sufferings, gentleness, . . . faith, meekness". Not the least remarkable among the fruits of the spirit that Shri Ramakrishna brought back with him from his quest of the Absolute was his complete conquest of lust and greed—*Kamini Kanchan.*

He had been married at the age of twenty-three to a child aged five. According to the prevalent Indian custom at that time, such child marriages remained unconsummated till the bride came of age. His child wife had, accordingly, lived apart from him with her parents ever since their marriage. During a visit to his village home in 1867 the two came to know each other intimately. She was then eighteen. "I have learnt," he said to her, "to look upon every woman as Mother. . . . But if you

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wish to draw me into the world, as I have been married to you, I am at your service." But Saradamoni—for that was his wife's name—instead of asking him to make that supreme sacrifice, told him he was free to follow his life's bent. With a spiritual awareness far beyond her years, she recognised him as her guide and put herself at his service.

Touched by her simple faith, Shri Ramakrishna took upon himself the part of an "elder brother" and devoted himself patiently to her education as a diligent wife. Those who visited their home were struck by its cleanliness and order. In 1872, when Saradamoni came to stay with him for the first time, at Dakshineswar, he with "a tenderness compounded of religious respect, purged of all trace of desire and sensual disturbance" took the final step that sealed their mutual sacramental relationship for ever. Installing her in the seat of Kali, he hailed her as the embodiment of the Divine Mother and worshipped her with due ritual as "the living symbol of immaculate humanity". She became to him an ideal helpmate and companion in life, bringing to him the gift of her "pious affection and tender disinterestedness". When later he founded his mission, she became Mother to the order, irradiating peace and serenity to all who came in contact with her.

Seekers after perfection in India had hitherto either run away from family life, holding that a religious life *ipso facto* released a man from every other obligation, or had accommodated themselves to its demands. In the case of Ramakrishna, there was neither a repudiation of the conjugal obligations, nor a timid compromise with the ideal, but a bold acceptance of the binding rights of the wife and their transmutation by mutual consent into something higher and nobler. It set the pattern that moulded the life and outlook of another who came after him—Gandhiji, though he arrived at it by a different path. Gandhiji, in his turn, presented it to those thousands of nameless heroes and heroines, the rank and file workers all over the country in the various Ashramas as well as outside, who constituted the inner core of India's non-violent freedom struggle. Saradamoni the Ma became the antetype of Kasturbai the Ba (Mother), occupying in Shri Ramakrishna's little world at Dakshineswar the place that Kasturbai was to later occupy in Gandhiji's Ashram.

"All great mystics and the majority of great idealists . . . even . . . free-thinkers . . . and . . . sensualists as Beethoven, Balzac and Flaubert," observes Romain Rolland, have borne testimony to "the formidable power of concentrated soul, of accumulated creative energy that is generated by a renunciation of the organic and psychic expenditure of sexuality."[7] Many had before Shri Ramakrishna declared the glory of Brahmacharya and the boundless spiritual potentialities of its full practice. But it was Shri Ramakrishna who demonstrated in all its sublimity the possibility of absolute continence even for a householder, without detracting from the sanctity, sweetness or grace of family life. Introduced in

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Indian nationalism, it became an intensely active leaven which by permeating silently and unseen the lives of the many, created by its presence even in infinitesimal dilutions a new temper and a new spiritual climate in the era that followed. It became an important factor in the phenomenal non-violent mass-awakening of India in the nineteen twenties.

4

Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa holds a place in India's social and national regeneration, all his own. The core of his teaching was that realisation is the essence of religion. All disputation, controversies and polemics stop when realisation begins. It is only those who have no religious experience that quarrel about the forms. To a man who has realised, all religions are paths leading to the same goal. And this with him was not a merely intellectual or philosophical belief but a positive experience. He had practised all the religions—Hinduism, Islam and Christianity—he declared, and walked the paths of the different denominations of Hinduism and he had found that "it is the same God towards whom all are travelling, only they are coming through diverse ways." In his credo there was room for "the formless God and for the forms of all gods".[8]

What he aimed at was not merely eclecticism—weaving morsels of "other people's flowers" into the nosegay of his own creed, or even reconciliation of warring creeds by "accommodation" and "tolerance". In an era of creedal warfare he boldly stood out for the *acceptance* of all religions, because every religion is only a partial representation of the ineffable Absolute, because all religions are true in the essence and they all lead to the same goal. "Do not argue about doctrine and religions," he said, "there is only one. All rivers flow to the ocean. . . .The great stream carves out for itself according to the slope of its journey—according to race, time and temperament—its own distinct bed. But it is all the same water. . . ."[9]

He deprecated all vain philosophical discussions and metaphysical hair-splitting in which the learned revelled. Love of God is more important than knowledge of God, he taught. "You may not believe in the existence of Radha and Krishna but you must have the love of Radha for Krishna." The one thing needful is the intensity of yearning for God. "When you go into a mango grove, you should eat the sweet fruit and not go about counting the leaves of all the trees. When a jug of water from a tank is able to quench thirst, why do you worry yourself about the exact quantity of water in the tank?"[10]

Secondly, he taught that nobody can truly love man, and hence nobody can truly serve him, unless he loves the God in him. In the converse, nobody can really know God unless he has seen Him in every man. He, therefore, said that he had no use for individual salvation. His prayer was that he might be born over and over again, "even in the form of a dog", if so he could be of help to a single soul.

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Thirdly, while repudiating the egoism of individual salvation, he denied that any single real or durable good could emerge from a corrupt soul. Every man should first purge himself of lust and greed before he could do any useful service to the world.

Fourthly, he taught that love of God should take precedence not only of knowledge but of good works also. People, who talk about "helping the world" in disparagement of the striving for self-realisation, do not know what they are talking about. All the good works that a mortal can perform are a mere nothing compared to the vastness of the universe and its problems. God alone can look after the world. It is for man only to learn to do His will. Endowed with His power, he will then be able to do good to others. Social service and striving for self-realisation are not mutually exclusive, but complementary. Each must lead to and find expression in the other.

Finally, while service is no doubt good and necessary, it should be an expression of disinterested love. Social service has meaning only when it "lights the lamp of charity and love" in the heart—"love, not limited in its application to self, family, sect, or country, but that which raises and leads men to God." Social service that lacks this inwardness is a meaningless mummery.

He saw the great religious contemporaries around him spending themselves in fruitless polemics—disputing, quarrelling, torturing texts to uphold the truth of their assertion. In weariness of the soul he exclaimed: "Are you going to use it, or are you going to waste this brief span called life in fighting other people? Make the dogs of invective keep quiet. Let the elephant of Being sound the clarion trumpet. . . ."[11] Poets and philosophers in all ages had praised truth and virtue but they had failed to make the world virtuous. Why? Because they lacked inner realisation. "We must live an inner life so intense that it becomes a Being. The Being will give birth to innumerable torches of truth. . . . Let us raise a mountain of God in the midst of humanity. . . . When it has been raised, it will continue to pour forth rivers of light and compassion over mankind for ever."[12]

Here was an altogether new approach to social activity. In his mass movements for social uplift, Gandhiji chose for his instruments men not noted for their cleverness or for their intellect, but men of purity and penance. "Self-purification is the means as well as the end of all activity, whether social or political," he declared. "It is the key to success in all undertakings." From this, spiritualisation of politics was a natural and easy transition.

5

The man, who was destined to translate into action Shri Ramakrishna's gospel of disinterested service and to become his interpreter

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to the West, was Narendranath Datta, the founder of the Ramakrishna Mission. He was born in a middle class family in Calcutta in 1863. Of an athletic build, an adept in boxing, wrestling and swimming, a lover of music and a keen student of poetry and philosophy, he was only seventeen when he came under Shri Ramakrishna's influence. It was a passing remark of Mr. Hastie, the Principal of Scottish Mission College, where he was studying, that led his footsteps to Shri Ramakrishna, his would-be teacher. While lecturing to his class on the personal experience described by Wordsworth in his poem "Excursion", Mr. Hastie remarked that such an experience was the result of "purity of mind and concentration on a particular subject" and was "rare indeed in the modern world". He had seen only one person, he went on to observe, who had experienced that blessed state and he was Ramakrishna Paramahansa of Dakshineswar. "You can understand if you go there and see for yourself."

Narendranath went to Dakshineswar, saw the sage and asked: "Sir, have you seen God?"

"Yes, I see Him just as I see you here, only in a much intenser sense. . . . One can see and talk to Him as I am doing with you. . . . But who cares. . . . If one weeps sincerely for Him, He surely manifests Himself."

As a member of Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, Narendranath had asked that question of one celebrity after another, including Debendranath Tagore, without getting any satisfactory reply ("Sir, have you seen God?" "Boy, you have a Yogi's eyes."). Realisation was what he yearned for. Here at last was a man who dared to say that he had seen God, that religion was a reality to be felt, to be sensed in an infinitely intenser way than we can see the world. "I could not but believe as I heard those words," he says, "that they were no ordinary words but came directly from the depth of the realisation of the man who uttered them." From that moment his illumination began.

It was not before a prolonged period of obstinate struggle, during which he was driven nearly crazy, when his improvident father's sudden death obliged him to wander fruitlessly from one office to another in search of a job to keep him and his brothers from starving, that he surrendered himself wholly to the influence of his strange master. His critical intellect rebelled against what at that time appeared to him as Shri Paramahansa's "idiosyncrasies"—his piety, his ecstasies, his worship of the Mother, his visions and realisations. How was he sure they were not the hallucinations of a sick mind? Sometimes he felt that the queer old man ought to be put in a strait jacket. But his visits to Dakshineswar continued despite himself and Shri Ramakrishna's influence upon him grew.

The Master communicated to him some of his realisations. But having given him a foretaste of the experience of the Absolute, he forbade

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him that felicity till the mission for which he had singled him out was complete; viz. to relieve the suffering of India's destitute, downtrodden millions.

On Christmas eve, 1886, following the death of Shri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda with his fellow disciples took the vow of life-long renunciation and dedication to disinterested service of humanity. Thus was formed the nucleus of the Ramakrishna order.

Two years later, in 1888, he began his life of wanderings, which lasted, with minor breaks, for nearly five years. Undaunted by the hardships and perils of the journey, taking no thought for the morrow, he went about on foot incognito, swallowed up in the immensity of India. He wandered all over the sub-continent from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin. His travels revealed to him eternal India with her bewildering diversity of races, cultures and creeds, as also the fundamental unity of flesh and spirit beneath that diversity. The appalling poverty of her masses and the hopelessness of their misery overwhelmed him. He beat his breast in anguish when he heard about a starvation death in Calcutta. "What have we done—we so-called men of God, the *Sannyasins*—what have we done for the masses," he moaned.

At Cape Comorin he consecrated himself to the service of India, particularly the service of her oppressed, starving millions and took the name of Vivekananda—the name by which he was thereafter to be known. His travels had transformed him into a patriot monk.

His Master's words, "Religion is not for empty bellies", came back to him. "I have now travelled all over India," he confided to his fellow disciples. "But alas! It was agony to me to see with my own eyes the terrible poverty and misery of the masses. It is now my firm conviction that it is futile to preach religion among them without first trying to remove their poverty and their sufferings."

But how could he help them? He had no money. The ghastly procession of famines with its grisly dance of death during the latter half of the nineteenth century, that had burnt itself in upon the consciousness of every son of India, had evoked nothing but a cynical indifference on the part of the administration. Even the most munificent donations of a few millionaires and Rajahs could hardly cover a fraction of India's need. Before India woke up and organised herself for the required effort, her ruin would be complete.

The idea of an appeal to the West for help began to take shape in Vivekananda's mind. He had read of a Parliament of Religions to be held "sometime, somewhere" in America. The whole world had need of India, he reflected. Surely it could not allow her spiritual reserves to perish, as had happened in the case of many other nations. To appeal to the West for the means for ameliorating the material condition of India and to take to it in exchange the gospel of the Spirit, he decided to go to America.

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Refusing offers of financial help for his journey from rich bankers and other moneyed folk, he declared, "I am going on behalf of the people and the poor", and with subscriptions collected from the public by friends and disciples, in May, 1893, he set sail for America.

He arrived in the United States without any credentials or letters of introduction. Unknown and knowing nobody there, with what little money he had run out, he was introduced to Prof. J. H. Wright of the Harvard University by a rich American lady. He had met her by chance during a railway journey from Chicago to Boston and she, impressed by his conversation, had invited him to her home. Prof. J. H. Wright recognised his genius and sent him to his friend, Dr. Barrows, the Chairman of the Committee for the Selection of Delegates to the Parliament of Religions, with a note saying: "Here is a man who is more learned than all our learned professors put together."

In the Parliament that opened in Chicago on September 11, 1893, Vivekananda spoke on the first day briefly, and that too towards the close. But his speech, though it lasted for no more than three minutes, took everybody in the Parliament by storm. On the previous night he had slept at the Chicago Railway Station in an empty box, having nowhere else to go. Before the day closed, he was a world celebrity.

Addressing the delegates assembled in the Parliament as "sisters and brothers of America", he began: "We believe not only in universal toleration but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions, and all nations of the earth." He ended with the words: "I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of the Convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feeling between persons wending their way to the same goal." In his address on the closing day, he pleaded for a comity of religions not by the destruction of other religions but by their synthesis. "The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each religion must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve its individuality and grow according to its own law of growth."

Throughout the session, he was very much in request. His addresses in the Convention were reproduced in full in the American Press. "He is undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions," wrote the *New York Herald*. "After hearing him we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation."

He was then thirty.

But personal success meant nothing to him. On the day of his triumph in the Parliament of Religions, invited by a man of great wealth and distinction to his home in one of the most fashionable quarters of the city of Chicago, he passed the night tossing restlessly in his luxurious bed, haunted by the thought of India's starving masses. "Mother, what

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self-renunciation and service of the masses as its goal. He announced his intention of founding a number of institutions to train young men to deliver the message of India's ancient spiritual wisdom to humanity in India and outside India. To this end he appealed to the youth to come forward in their numbers—"strong, vigorous, believing young men, sincere to the backbone", who would "conquer India and the world" by serving them. "A hundred such, and the world becomes revolutionised."

> For the next fifty years...let all other vain gods disappear...from our minds. This is the only God that is awake, our own race, everywhere His hands, everywhere His feet, everywhere His ears, He covers everything. ...The first of all worship is the worship of the *Virat*, of those all around us....These are all our gods,—men and animals, and the first gods we have to worship are our own countrymen.[15]

In 1889, he founded another monastery at Mayavati in the Almora District in addition to the one already at Belur. Having put these institutions on a proper footing, he paid one more visit to the West to see how the work that he had started there was progressing. In April, 1900, he left New York to return to India *via* Europe in December of the same year.

His success in the Parliament of Religions and after had made him many enemies. The bitterest among them were the Christian missionaries. They never forgave him for having put an end to the palmy days of their unchallenged supremacy and persecuted him as only the Christian missionary of a certain type can do, spreading all sorts of malicious lies about him. These were in turn taken up by some of the rival Indian religious organisations, to their and to India's shame. With Job's patience, Vivekananda held his peace for years and then gave an *expose* which was as crushing as it was complete.

One more tour he undertook, his last, through northern India. This was followed by a visit to Amarnath in Kashmir in the ensuing year. His constitution had already been undermined by the strain of incessant labour coupled with diabetes. But, in spite of his illness, he allowed himself no respite. Only one idea possessed him—how to put in good, strong working order the machine for elevating the masses that he had set up, "a lever for the good of humanity which no power can drive back".[16] "I have lost all wish for my salvation," he said to his fellow monks. "I never wanted earthly enjoyments. . . . May I be born again and again and suffer a thousand miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls. . . ."[17] As the head of the monastery, he set the example of "toil unsevered from tranquillity", dividing his time between giving lessons in metaphysics, Sanskrit and Oriental and Western philosophy on the one hand, and tilling the garden, digging a well and kneading bread on the other. One of his favourite sayings was: "No work is secular. All work

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is adoration and worship."[18] Nor did he recognise any vertical divisions in various forms of work. All useful work is equally noble. If his fellow disciples told him that he was to pass the rest of his life cleaning the drains of the monastery, he said, he would certainly do it. "He alone is a great leader who knows how to obey for public good."

He postulated to his fellow monks three conditions of success. The first was faith, faith that calls up the Divinity within. "You can do anything. You fail only when you do not strive sufficiently to manifest infinite power. Believe . . . in yourself, and . . . in God. A handful of strong men will move the world. . . ."[19]

Next was renunciation. Only a great monk (a man vowed to the service of the Absolute) could be a great worker, "for he is without attachments". Such a man would have faith that can move mountains. For "he dwells in God; God dwells in him."

Last but not least was bravery, "courage to speak the whole truth always, to all without distinction, without equivocation, without fear, without compromise. Do not trouble about the rich and the great. The *Sannyasins'* duty is with the poor."

It was no easy task to convert his fellow disciples from the individualistic to his conception of religious life, in which public spirit and service to fellow men occupied a prominent place. The test of faith, he insisted, is action. If a man has a living faith in God, then since God is all in all and is in everything, "he who has seen God, will live for all." Many of the devotees so-called, he said, were in practice atheists and worse than atheists. "They talked about religion, fought about it but never wanted it." As against it there were "a great many spiritual people, a great many sensible men who did not believe in God at all", that is to say, not in the accepted sense of the word. "Perhaps they understand God better than we do."

Personally, he preferred the use of the old word "God", he said, because it had been used from time immemorial; because if they rejected it, "each man will offer a different word, and the result will be a confusion of tongues, a new tower of Babel."[20] Whether He was recognised as the Personal God or the Impersonal, the Infinite, the Moral Law, or the Ideal Man, did not matter in the least. A man may not believe in any God, may not have prayed even once in his whole life, yet if through the power of good works he has reached a stage where, he is ready to give up life and all else for them, "he has arrived at the same point to which the religious man will come through his prayers and the philosopher through his knowledge."[21] The only true way to see God is to see Him in man. No one can afford to rest on the past, however glorious. They had to justify their great past in the context of the living present.

He castigated the selfish greed of the devotee, who is preoccupied only with his own salvation. It is the salvation of others that one must seek. "Let us go from village to village and dedicate ourselves to the

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service of the poor. Let us convince the rich of their duties towards the masses by the force of our character, by our spirituality and austere life. . . ." He spoke of the danger of "cerebral congestion"—of paralysis of one member of India's body politic as a result of unequal distribution of wealth. He reminded them of "the poor, the humble and the unfortunate, those who are the vertebral column of the nation, those whose work produces the food of all."[22] Then there were thousands of pariahs, the untouchables so-called. "Until they are raised, the Great Mother (India) will never awake."[23] In Romain Rolland's phrase, "He surrounded service with a 'divine aureole', and raised it to the dignity of religion."

"If Service is done in the true spirit of worship," he taught, "it is the most efficacious means of spiritual progress. . . . Begin by giving your life to save the life of the dying, that is the essence of religion."[24] To a Pundit who complained that the Swami had not been able to find time to talk to him of religion, when he came to see him during the epidemic of 1899, he said: "So long as a single dog in my country is without food, my whole religion will be to feed it."[25] He reproved a lay disciple, who complained of the difficulty of establishing harmony and unity in India saying, "Must you consider the fruits of your action? . . . Cannot you throw away one life for the love of others?" He added after a pause: "After so much *tapasya*, I have come to realise that the highest truth is this: He is present in all beings. They are all His multiple forms. There is no other God to seek. He alone serves God who serves all other beings !"[26]

The end came suddenly, as in the case of Gandhiji, on a Friday. It was the 4th of July, 1902. He was then only thirty-nine.

7

"I am not ashamed to repeat before you," Gandhiji once declared during the Non-Cooperation movement, "that this is a religious battle. I am not ashamed to repeat before you that this is an attempt to revolutionise the political outlook, that this is an attempt to revolutionise our politics." His remark at that time gave rise to a lot of ill-informed criticism, which continues to be echoed still at times. By religion he meant not any denominational religion but religion in its universal or spiritual aspect, which is so firmly embedded in India's thought-structure. Not the least of Vivekananda's achievements was his rediscovery of religion in its universal aspect. Religion, in its true sense, Vivekananda taught, is synonymous with 'Universalism of the Spirit'. "The religious ideals of the future must embrace all that exists in the world and is good and great, and, at the same time, have infinite scope for future development."[27] Not till religious conceptions had attained to this universalism, would religion be realised in its fulness.

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So long as religion was in the hands of a chosen few, or of a body of priests, it lived "in temples, churches, books, ceremonials, and rituals" only. But when it was realised in its spiritual, universal aspect, it would become real and living. It would then "come into our very nature, live in our every moment, penetrate every pore of our society and be infinitely more a power for good than it has ever been before."[28] Thus regarded, the days of religion were not over, they had just begun. "Contrary to the belief of all who know it not, religion is a matter for the future far more than for the past."[29] As the progress of science put more and more power into the hands of man, Vivekananda warned, the world would need more and more of religion to save it from self-destruction.

Nor was the claim of religion in its wider sense opposed to that of science. Both religion and science were an expression of man's search for truth. One was concerned with the study of the mental phenomena and different varieties of personal experience, the other—the so-called materialistic sciences—with that of the physical phenomena. Mankind needed both; neither could be rejected. They were both "attempts to help us out of the slavery."[30] But whether science accepted religion or not, religion in its true sense could not afford to reject science. It was vast enough to accommodate all those whose quest was the finding of truth.

If then, religion could not reject science, much less could one religion reject all other religions as false, and claim exclusive infallibility for itself. "Is God's book finished? Or is it a continuous revelation still going on," asks Vivekananda. "The Bible, the *Vedas*, the *Koran* and all other sacred books are but so many pages and an infinite number of pages remain yet to be unfolded." We must, therefore, "take in all that has been in the past, enjoy the light of the present and open every window of the heart for all that will come in the future."[31] Despite their imperfections, each great system of faith represented one portion of Universal Truth, emphasised some particular aspect or aspects of it in answer to the need, urge, and temperament of each group and the challenge of the times. Our watchword therefore must be "acceptance" and not exclusion, not even "toleration, which is an insult and a blasphemy", for it assumes for oneself exclusive possession of the whole truth. "Man never progresses from error to truth, but from truth to truth."[32] It is not enough to tell others, who follow a different path, that they are not wrong, they must be helped each to follow his own way. For, all ways lead to God and that way which the nature of each makes it absolutely necessary for him to take is the right way.[33] God is the centre of all the radii. "The farther they are from the centre the greater is the distance between any two",[34] but all difference vanishes when the centre is reached. Since all are converging towards the same centre in the sun, the only solution is for everyone to forge ahead, "firm in his own faith and respecting others". We shall then, as Tolstoy put it, "all meet when we have arrived".

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"Historically," it has been observed, the grand discovery of the *Vedanta* "एकं सद् विप्राः बहुधा वदन्ति" (He who exists is One, the Sages call Him variously), put an end to "all warfare on behalf of the tribal gods among the ancient Aryans. The gods continued to exist . . . but they were all perceived to be so many aspects or manifestations of the One *Sat*, the Supreme Reality." It was this tradition that, entering the very life-blood of the nation, made India a country where Muslim Emperors made endowments to Hindu shrines and where Hindus built mosques and churches for religions whose avowed aim was to overthrow Hinduism!![35] Incorporated in India's political creed, it provided the vital element that was necessary for the emergence of nationalism a few years later. Not only did the doctrine of oneness provide a meeting ground for different religions on a basis of equality but, as propounded by Vivekananda, it provided a basis also for the meeting of science and religion, which India needed to face with confidence the future in a changing world. Further, the *Vedanta*, with its universality, impersonality, rationality, catholicity and optimism, provided the ethical foundation for the spiritualisation of democracy, socialism, liberty, equality and fraternity on which depends the future of society, and which Gandhiji envisaged as India's special mission in the world.

While Vivekananda recognised the unity of all faiths and religions, he being a great intellectual and a system-builder, could not help making this recognition "an article of doctrine and subject of instruction", with the result that he ended up, despite himself, with setting up an order and system of thought, whose aim was the establishment of the spiritual hegemony of the *Vedanta* over all other forms of belief, "to discipline the independent but coordinate kingdoms of the Spirit under the sceptre of the One", instead of making, in the realm of faith, for a "Federation of men of goodwill."[36] This created a hiatus in the practice of his doctrine of "universal tolerance". The lacuna had to be filled up. It required strenuous rethinking of the whole question to declare, as Gandhiji did later, that he would not only not try to convert, but would not "even secretly pray that anyone should embrace my faith."[37] Deprecating even voluntary conversion, he said, "If several persons think that they ought to change their religious 'etiquette', I cannot deny that they are free to do so,—but I am sorry to see it."[38] In Russia, Tolstoy independently propounded his philosophy of universal "acceptance". It will be described elsewhere in these pages.

8

Keshub Chunder Sen had dreamed a grand dream—"to canalise the divine stream for the moral and social regeneration of the nation". He wanted India to acquire a new moral conscience. "Let all souls be

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socialised," he said, "and realise their unity with the people, that visible community." But to awaken India's three hundred and thirty millions from their centuries-old torpor, to eradicate their time-hardened prejudices and evil customs, and to weld them into a unity for an organised, concerted effort for national deliverance, called for a motive force and tools of action wholly different from what Indian leaders had hitherto been familiar with. Shri Ramakrishna's realisations and the formulations of Vivekananda provided the basis for the new dynamic.

By proclaiming the omnipotence of intense, withdrawn mystic thought, the self-acting nature of realised truth, the power of living faith to communicate itself without the medium of speech or action, and the validity of all the different modes of experiencing the Supreme, Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa revealed to his contemporary world new modes of thought and action. Gandhiji, led by other guides—some Eastern, some Western—discovered for himself, by laborious experimentation, the same truths which he elaborated into his novel techniques of mass awakening, and non-violent organisation and action that were seen at work in his Satyagraha struggles.

By introducing the method of objective verification in the field of religious experience, Shri Ramakrishna laid the foundation of what Vivekananda called the 'Science of the Spirit'. "Experiment first and then believe," he said, "belief ought to follow, not precede religious experience." His experiments in religion anticipated Gandhiji's "Experiments With Truth". His doctrine of the truth of all religions found an echo in the latter's "equal respect for all religions", and his deprecation of theological polemics as the idle pastime of the learned, in Gandhiji's repudiation of all proselytising activity as ungodly.

God to Shri Ramakrishna was no abstraction or a hypothesis but a reality to be seen, felt, spoken to, consulted with every moment. Gandhiji said, "I am surer of His existence than of the fact that you and I are sitting in this room. I may live without air and water, but not without Him." No important decision of his was taken without consulting the "inner voice".

Living faith, Shri Ramakrishna affirmed, has the power to communicate itself. "Living faith may be given and received in a tangible fashion and more truly than anything else in the world."[39] Or, as Romain Rolland put it, "The thyme makes no effort to convince you. All you have to do is to smell its fresh scent."

In almost identical language, Gandhiji testified:

> Our spiritual experiences are necessarily shared and communicated, whether we suspect it or not, but by our lives and our examples, not by our words which are a very inadequate vehicle. Spiritual experiences are deeper than thought itself. By the very fact that we live, spiritual experience will overflow.[40]

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Life is its own expression....The rose does not need to write a book or deliver a sermon on the scent it sheds all around, nor on the beauty which everyone who has eyes can see....Spiritual life is infinitely superior to the beautiful and fragrant rose....The moment there is a spiritual expression in life, the surroundings will readily respond.[41]

Elaborating his Master's idea regarding the power of concentrated thought, Shri Ramakrishna's disciple Swami Vivekananda said: "The highest men are . . . silent. . . . They...know the power of thought; they are sure that even if they go into a cave and close the door and simply think *five true thoughts* and then pass away, these five thoughts of theirs will live throughout eternity."[42] Gandhiji enunciated the same truth with the precision of a scientific law thus: "There are two kinds of thought, idle and active. There may be myriads of the former. . . . They do not count. . . . But one pure, active thought proceeding from the depth and endowed with all the undivided intensity of one's being, becomes dynamic."[43]

No word with Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, it was said, was merely a word; it was an act, a reality. "When you yourself are filled with the essence of existence," he told Keshub Chunder Sen on a memorable occasion, "all that you say will come true. . . . When a man despoiled of self comes among us, his acts are the very pulses of the heart of virtue; all that he does to others makes even their most humdrum dreams greater, so that all they touch becomes true and pure; they become the father of reality. And what he creates never dies."[44]

This emerged in Gandhiji's philosophy of soul force as a technique of action:

> There is no such thing as compulsion in...non-violence....There must be power in the word of a Satyagrahi General....Since thought is the root of all speech and action, the quality of the latter corresponds to that of the former. Hence, perfectly controlled thought is itself power of the highest potency and can become self-acting....If man is after the image of God, he has but to will a thing in the limited sphere allotted to him and it becomes.[45]

And again,

> There comes a time when an individual becomes irresistible and his action becomes all-pervasive in its effect. This comes when he reduces himself to zero.[46]

The first describes the phenomenon; the second enunciates the condition governing it.

It is the essence of a scientific truth that what has been experienced once by anyone should be capable of being experienced again by others by reproducing all the conditions of the original experiment. The secret of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa's realisations might have passed into oblivion with him had there not been someone to present in precise, scientific language, intelligible to the contemporary

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world, their rationale. Swami Vivekananda supplied that need. Not only did he clothe in action his Master's abstract thoughts, but by bringing his giant intellect to bear on his teachings, he became an interpreter between him and the contemporary world, a bridge-builder between the East and the West, the present and the past, whose writings affected Tolstoy on the one hand and Gandhiji on the other.

In the brief span of barely a decade, he accomplished work enough for a life-time. He did not live to see the full fruition of his dreams, but his passion-charged words continued to reverberate in men's hearts through the following era. He had a genius for the arresting phrase. He gave India the expression '*Daridranarayana*'—God incarnated as oppressed humanity. First adopted by Deshabandhu C. R. Das to designate a programme of service which he drew up for the Swaraj Party in the Calcutta Corporation, it became the watch-word of India's non-violent struggle when Gandhiji inscribed it on his banner in his crusade for the resuscitation of India's seven hundred thousand villages.

Take again Vivekananda's declaration about the futility of preaching religion to hungry stomachs, or his utterance: "He alone serves God who serves all other beings. . . . There is no other God to seek."[47] How identical with Gandhiji's

"I recognise no God except the God that is to be found in the hearts of the dumb millions....And I worship the God that is Truth or Truth which is God, through the service of these millions....How am I to talk of God to the millions who have to go without two meals a day? To them God can only appear as bread and butter....Talk to them of modern progress. Insult them by taking the name of God before them in vain. They will call you and me fiends if we talk about God to them....I suggest that we are thieves in a way....We should be ashamed of resting or having a square meal so long as there is one able-bodied man or woman without work or food."[48]

Instances of parallelism in their thought and expression can be multiplied. Gandhiji never wearied of proclaiming that his life was made up of little things. Since non-violence expresses itself best through insignificant-looking little things rather than big, he called upon the people to forget the big things and concentrate on the small; they would then get big results. Swami Vivekananda, as he lay dying, confided to his English disciple, Sister Nivedita: "As I grow older, I find that I look more and more for greatness in *little* things. . . . Anyone will be great in a great position. . . . More and more the true greatness seems to me that of the worm, doing its duty silently, steadily, from moment to moment and hour to hour."[49]

Gandhiji time and again expressed, especially towards the close, his dread of becoming a deadweight on those around him, and smothering their growth. Swami Vivekananda had no less a horror of the same:

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"How often does a man ruin his disciples by remaining always with them," he once remarked. He even felt like going away, he said, from his disciples so that they might develop by themselves. Asked to express his opinion on the questions of the day, he resolutely refused, saying: "I can no more enter into outside affairs, I am already on the way." [50]

The striking resemblance that the experiences and sayings of Shri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Gandhiji bear one to the other, is hardly to be wondered at, for they were fellow-pilgrims on the road to eternity. The self-same landmarks of the inner landscape of the spirit which they traversed in common were, therefore, bound to figure again and again in their spiritual travelogue. To vary the metaphor, the selfsame fountain-spring of the godhead within, from which they drew their sap, produced blossoms and fruit of identical colouring and fragrance in the case of each. Their common characteristics proclaim the common origin and the objective nature of the Reality which they had experienced. In the case of Vivekananda and Gandhiji the resemblance in regard to language and expression is even closer. And no wonder, for they had both drunk of the well of Western knowledge.

9

To every mortal is given an allotted field, an allotted span of life and an allotted range of capabilities and talents. It is for each to follow his own destiny loyally and sincerely. The rest is in the hands of the Master Designer. Shri Ramakrishna knew it. Swami Vivekananda found it. He broke new ground, he led the people within sight of the Promised Land, but he did not enter it. He discovered the masses as a spiritual entity. He focussed attention on their destitution and demoralisation. No one before Gandhiji had given more poignant expression to the anguish of the oppressed and down-trodden of India, or identified himself with them more completely than he. But the deeper underlying economic and political causes, of which their inertia, ignorance and lack of organisation were symptoms, had to be scientifically analysed and studied before a remedy could be found. This called for the devoted labours of a whole generation of workers who had specialised in it.

Vivekananda made the bold declaration that every national activity in India had to be conducted on a spiritual basis, but he excluded the whole field of political activity from his purview. Politics in his days was considered to be by its very nature amoral—inherently a "dirty game". The thought that it could be and must be spiritualised had not yet occurred to anybody. Vivekananda's nature recoiled from the idea of entering the muck-hole. But more than that, it was, one feels, the lack of an effective moral sanction in the political field that led him to place "a naked sword", as he put it, between himself and politics. In the complex world of today, however, it is not possible for one

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to lead a religious life, unless one identifies oneself with the whole of mankind, and this does not admit of running away from politics. The exclusion of politics by Vivekananda left the individual with no choice except either to lead a "double life", by letting himself be governed by the spiritual law in the sphere of personal and social relationships and by the rule of amoral behaviour in the political sphere, or to run away from evil and thereby become indirectly involved in it. The result in either case was demoralisation. To restore to the individual and the nation their spiritual integrity, politics needed to be placed on a moral basis so that it might serve those who took part in it, as a means of self-purification and spiritual progress instead of being a hindrance—at best a necessary evil.

Finally, while Vivekananda proclaimed the omnipotence of the Atman, and the power of *tapasya*, the techniques of harnessing soul-force to collective social action had yet to be found. *Tapasya* had to be democratised, by bringing its practice within the competence of the common man in his collectivity through the medium of constructive work, for national deliverance.

It does not seem that Vivekananda had arrived at a definite conception of Ahimsa as the law of our being that is self-sanctioning. Ahimsa with him was still an ethics, a beatitude, a personal virtue of the highest order—not the "activest force" or the most powerful weapon in the battle of right against wrong, with an unfailing application in the face of evil under every conceivable circumstance, that Gandhiji after a lifetime of experimentation and *tapasya*, demonstrated it to be.

Maintaining the time-honoured distinction between a *Sannyasin* and a householder, Vivekananda laid down the dictum: Non-resistance for the *Sannyasins*, self-defence for the householder.[51] In his impatience, he sometimes even talked of using martial music as a cure for the emasculation of the nation. The *Vedanta*, he said, might be professed by cowards, but could be practised only by the most stout-hearted. The doctrine of non-resistance necessarily involved the capacity and ability to resist and conscious refraining from having recourse to resistance. True, but the practical deduction that he made from it—"Forgive when you could bring (if you wished) legions of angels to an easy victory",[52] does not necessarily follow from his premise. Assurance beforehand of physical victory cannot be made a precondition of the practice of forgiveness. If the spirit is undaunted and there is true forgiveness in the heart, the triumph of a principle or a cause may come in spite of, sometimes even through, defeat.

The sight of a field of ruins, the result of wars, during his visit to Amarnath, in Kashmir, in 1898, made Vivekananda exclaim: "How can such things be allowed? If I had been there I would have given my life to protect the 'Mother'."[53] But presently he found an escape from his dilemma: "Mother (Kali) said to me: 'What, even if

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unbelievers should enter My temples and defile My images !! What is that to you? Do you protect Me or do I protect you?' " A man of volcanic energy that Vivekananda was, this may well have been, as Romain Rolland points out, a flight from the vehemence of his own nature which, in absence of an effective spiritual (i.e. non-violent) sanction, might have driven him in spite of himself into a course of action that was opposed to his deepest instinct. His renunciation of politics was an escape from the necessity of action which might demand jettisoning of ethical values.

Asked, "What should we do when we see the strong oppress the weak?" he replied: "Why, thrash the strong, of course."[54] The answer in terms of the non-violence of the brave, that rules out equally cowardly acquiescence in evil on the one hand and self-defeating expedient of opposing evil with evil on the other, was left to Gandhiji to develop out of his own realisations.

The student of the science of non-violence is faced with some other difficulties. Neither Shri Ramakrishna nor his disciple had any inhibition in regard to flesh diet, indulging in good cheer or smoking at times. To Vivekananda there was no such thing as forbidden food. He regarded the giving up of meat-eating under the influence of Buddhism as one of the causes of India's emasculation and downfall. We do not know if Shri Ramakrishna at any time dissociated himself from the ritual of animal sacrifice to the Goddess Kali. Nor did Vivekananda's philosophy of life, one feels, exclude killing in every circumstance. One wonders whether he would have had any objection on principle—his disciple Sister Nivedita admittedly had none—to the use of terrorist methods or to an armed insurrection for ending India's subjection.

In all this he, like his Master, more or less represented the orthodox Indian tradition which forbids killing except when it is sanctioned or prescribed by the scriptures. But the law is unrelenting. Psyche being a whole, in which nothing can take place in any part without every other part being affected, the law of non-violence must lose its sanction if it is broken at any point. It has to pervade and show through every pore of our being. "We cannot touch a flower without troubling of a star," a poet has sung. What we eat, drink or wear, our work, recreation, rest or sleep, spending or saving, speech, deportment, or the way we earn our living—all these have an ethical significance in terms of the law of universal love and one must conform to its strict requirement in all its aspects before the power of Ahimsa can manifest itself in full.

This is not to say that abjuring of flesh diet, or of killing for sport or food, or a conscious acceptance of the law of Ahimsa is a *sine qua non* of the manifestation of the power of non-violence. Were it so it would mean that non-violence can be practised only by strict vegetarians, or by a small sect or coterie of people who are committed to a particular set of doctrines or beliefs, when just the opposite is the case. Ahimsa is the law of our being. It operates, even like the law of gravitation, irrespective of

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whether we recognise it or not. Eminent social scientists, naturalists and men of insight and vision like Kropotkin (*Mutual Aid As a Factor in Evolution*), Wallace, Konard Z. Lorenz (*King Soloman's Ring*) and Tourgenef have borne ample testimony to the operation of the law of Ahimsa in the whole realm of nature—even among savages, cannibals and wild beasts. Abstention from killing, flesh-eating or gratification of the senses are only some of its aspects. But they are not all. An individual may be very punctilious in regard to the observance of these, and yet may be selfish, callous, and hard-hearted; while another who has never given a thought to any of these things may be a very compassionate, kind-hearted, altruistic soul and show far more of the power that is Ahimsa than one who merely abstains from flesh-eating and killing for one purpose or another.

To point out the lacunae in their practice of the doctrine of oneness, otherwise known as the law of love, which the Pathfinders enunciated and exemplified is therefore not to belittle or abate from the grandeur or magnitude of their achievement. It only means that hardly any one, not even a spiritual prodigy, can escape bearing the marks of the tradition from which he is sprung. Vivekananda was a product of the Kshatriya way of life, Shri Ramakrishna that of the Shakta as practised in Bengal. It is no surprise therefore that their practice of the doctrine of oneness was coloured by the tradition from which they drew their sap just as a plant inevitably bears on its roots some particles of the soil that has nourished it. In the pursuit of an ideal, however, whose power is infinite, there can be no limit to the refinement to which its practice may be carried. There is no final resting place on the road to perfection. Gandhiji, after half a century of ceaseless and strenuous striving for Ahimsa, bore witness that "hills peep o'er hills and Alps on Alps arise" as we progress towards the goal. To attain it in full may need "long practice, even extending to several births." It may never be attained in its completeness. Even so the aspirant need not feel disheartened. As Gandhiji put it, "Travelling along the route the pilgrim will meet richer experiences from day to day so that he may have a glimpse of the beauty he is destined to see at the top. . . . This the richest grace of Ahimsa will descend easily upon the owner of hard discipline."[55]

To extend the scope of Ahimsa from the individual to the corporate basis, its practice needed to be broadened and refined. It was left to Western savants and sages to work out some of the social implications of non-violence in terms of our daily life—particularly in relation to its political and economic aspects. Theirs was largely an intellectual approach, which in varying degrees found expression in their practice. Gandhiji, on the other hand, realised first and rationalised afterwards. In the latter he was very much influenced by the writings of the Western savants. His language and expression consequently were deeply coloured

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by theirs. But when he came to the fundamentals he found that they did not go far enough and he had to fall back on ancient Indian philosophies—the *Vedanta* and the Jaina system of thought, for a firm foundation on which to rest his formulations.

10

"Every nation," writes the well-known author and patriot of Bengal, B. C. Pal, "has a particular world-idea of its own, and develops under the influence of its special environment, particular institutions and politics for the due realisation of this world-idea."[56] In the case of India, the one central fact of her history, he goes on to observe, has been the "fundamental conception of the *Vedanta* philosophy, namely, the unity of all life involving as its logical conclusion the identity of God and Man".

Twice, it has been pointed out, at a critical juncture in India's history, Advaita came to her rescue. When India was engulfed by a most hideous materialism, Buddha appeared. Again, when the springs of her vitality were dried up as a result of "demoralisation of the governing classes and superstition in the lower orders", Shankara infused new life into the nation by re-delivering the message of the *Vedanta* as a rational philosophy of life. The dynamic aspect of the *Vedanta* was, however, lost in the course of centuries, and the *Vedanta* became a synonym for dry metaphysics. Vivekananda took it out of the shifting, barren sands of speculation and turned it into a potent means of action.

Knowledge of the *Vedanta* had been hidden too long in caves and forests, he said. It was his mission to rescue it from its seclusion and to carry it into the midst of the family and social life. He envisaged a time when no walk of national life would be left untouched by it: "The drum of the Advaita shall be sounded in all places, in the bazaars, from the hill-tops and on the plains."[57]

Activity and passivity, the combative instinct and the instinct of withdrawal, Charles Baudouin has pointed out in his brilliant psychological studies, are complementary. Together, they form a system in a state of unstable equilibrium in which the tendencies of recoil and introversion, forward impulse and extraversion are held together in a rhythmic compensatory movement. This rhythm, "the swing from stress and strain to quietude and reflection, from storm to calm, from strife to peace,"[58] observes another eminent philosopher Dr. Radhakrishnan, is seen in the life of all dedicated persons. They carry into the world of action the illumination that they have gained in moments of self-withdrawal and contemplation. And "everywhere the new vision that comes in the solitude guides life in the storm. The men of vision weave their dreams into the fabric of actuality."[59]

Advaita, as a practical philosophy of life, by bringing to the Indian

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people the awareness of an inexhaustible reservoir of creative or regenerative force within, released a tremendous energy for action. "Man has never lost his empire," it proclaimed.

> The soul has never been bound. It is free by nature. It is without cause. It is beyond cause. Nothing can work upon it from without....Believe that you are free and you will be....The wind is blowing; those vessels whose sails are unfurled catch it, and so they go forward on their way, but those whose sails are furled do not catch the wind. Is that the fault of the wind?...Blame neither man nor God, nor anyone in the world....Blame yourselves, and try to do better....All the strength and succour you need is within yourselves. Therefore, make your own future.[60]

Under its quickening influence, voluntary organisations for service of the people during flood, famine and earthquake, and epidemics and other natural calamities sprang up all over the country. Ashrams, Seva Samitis and hospitals, nursing homes and educational institutions, both for men and women, began to multiply. Fired by the ideal of dedicated service, youth began to come forward in increasing numbers. India woke up from her long sleep.

The watchword of India's national awakening was unity. The supreme idea of the unity of all men in God provided a meeting ground for all the diverse elements in a nation of three hundred and thirty-two millions, containing within itself a hundred races, who spoke different languages and professed different faiths, were split up into two major communities with a long history of mutual antagonism and conflict, and were subdivided into countless castes and sub-castes. Motherland, the "symbol of the Supreme Mother of the Universe", incarnated in the body of the nation, "Mother India" of Bankim Chandra's famous "Vande Mataram" song, became the object of worship and adoration of every nationalist, no matter to what religious organisation he belonged. Patriotism, the worship of "the God that we see all around us . . . everywhere His hands, everywhere His feet, everywhere His ears", became the religion of awakened India.

In 1905 came the Partition of Bengal. It shook India to her depths. Bengal revolted. Three years after Vivekananda's death, the nationalist movement that had been smouldering for nearly two decades burst into flame, and it was seen "how potent a brazier of action is this Atman"!

Aurobindo Ghosh, one of the heroes of Bengal's revolt, in the course of a public speech on his release from prison, described how, when he had come to the end of his resources, he found strength in the Vedantic doctrine of oneness:

> When I was arrested,...I could not look into the heart of His intention. Therefore, I faltered for a moment....When the case opened in the lower court and we were brought before the Magistrate...He said to me, 'When you were cast into jail, did not your heart fail and did you not cry out to me,

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where is Thy protection? Look now at the Magistrate, look now at the Prosecuting Counsel.' I looked and it was not the Magistrate whom I saw, it was Vasudeva, it was Narayana who was sitting there on the bench. I looked at the Prosecuting Counsel and it was not the Counsel for the prosecution that I saw; it was Sri Krishna who sat there, it was my Lover and Friend who sat there and smiled. 'Now do you fear?' He said: 'I am in all men and I overrule their actions and their words. My protection is still with you and you shall not fear'.[61]

In the seclusion of the jail, after he was sentenced,

I said...I do not know what work to do or how to do it. Give me a message. And the message came:...'I have shown you that I am everywhere and in all men and in all things, that I am in this movement and I am not only working in those who are striving for the country but I am working also in those who oppose them and stand in their path. I am working in everybody and whatever men may think or do they can do nothing but help on my purpose....In all your actions you are moving forward without knowing which way you move....It is Shakti that has gone forth and entered into the people. Since long ago I have been preparing this uprising and now the time has come and it is I who will lead it to its fulfilment.'[62]

And this was the experience not of Aurobindo Ghosh alone, but of a host of other patriots also, who laid down their lives for the cause.

The *Vedanta* is the gospel of strength. But it is also the gospel of supreme detachment. It can prove a heady wine for the unwary. In its true state, the soul which is the Self, the "Atman within you, within all, within the Universe, before and beyond it" is an inexhaustible reservoir of moral energy. But it is attained only through complete detachment from the ego, when

Calmed are the clamours of the urgent flesh;
The tumult of the boastful mind is hushed;
Cords of the heart are loosened and set free;
Unfastened are the bondages that bind;
Attachment and delusion are no more![63]

"सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म" (All this is God) does not mean that the ego-bound individual with his passions, desires and delusions can arrogate to himself the omnipotence and omniscience of God and pretend to be beyond good and evil. It only means that it is open to everyone by merging his ego in the boundless ocean to share his might and majesty.

This vital proviso was missed by the more ardent spirits among the nationalists, and the *Vedanta* was used to justify violence and licence for the supposed benefit of a worthy cause.

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In consequence, tares had again to be separated from wheat. Purged of its errors and extravagances, the doctrine was reborn as Gandhiji's gospel of soul-force:

I believe in Advaita. I believe in the essential unity of man....Therefore, I believe that if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him and, if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent.[64]

Whenever I see an erring man, I say to myself, I have also erred; when I see a lustful man, I say to myself, so was I once; and in this way I feel kinship with everyone in the world and feel that I cannot be happy without the humblest of us being happy.[65]

If we shatter the chains of egotism and melt into the ocean of humanity, we share its dignity....To cease feeling that we are something is to become one with God. A drop in the ocean partakes of the greatness of its parent. ...But it is dried up as soon as it enters upon an existence independent of the ocean....

God is continuously in action without resting for a single moment. If we...become one with Him, our activity must be as unwearied as His. There may be momentary rest in store for the drop which is separated from the ocean, but not for the drop in the ocean, which knows no rest....As soon as we become one with the ocean in the shape of God, there is no more rest for us, nor indeed do we need rest any longer....This never-ceasing agitation holds the key to peace ineffable. This supreme state of total surrender is... not beyond the bounds of human experience.[66]

* * *

There are no racial, religious or geographical frontiers in the realm of the spirit. The rediscovery of the self and the eternal laws inscribed at the core of our being was not confined to the "Pathfinders" in India. It was a part of a world-wide phenomenon. In America it was embodied in the Transcendentalism of the Concord Circle. In England it found expression in the writings of Edward Carpenter and Madame Blavatsky and in the doctrine of the Esoteric Christian Brotherhood. In Russia Tolstoy proclaimed the same truths with an acumen and intellectual vigour rarely equalled. There was free intermingling and interaction of thought between the East and the West. In the process they were both enriched. New meanings were found in old truths, and new modes of action and fields for their application discovered. Finally, Gandhiji combining the social approach and experimental method of the West with the individual mystic religious experience of the East built the doctrine of the self into the applied science of Satyagraha or Soul Force. He also worked out the techniques of non-violent action, of which we have yet seen only the beginning.

With the "Pathfinders" the Indian Renaissance, for which two generations of Indian Patriots beginning with Raja Ram Mohun Roy

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had toiled, attained its adolescence. India thereafter no longer looked to outside for inspiration for her regeneration. She developed a consciousness of her own mission in the world. The root cause of the malady that had brought her low viz., the spiritual atrophy of her masses, had been diagnosed. The basic principles and the tools of action for her social and national regeneration had been broadly indicated. A beginning had also been made of the work needed for it. But its foundations had to be deepened, its scope extended, and more dimensions added to it. Labours of two more generations of dedicated spirits—Mehtas and Naorojis, Gokhales, Tilaks and Ranades, Nehrus and Dases, and finally, the Mahatma were needed before India could come into her own and take her rightful place in the world.

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CHAPTER V

OUT OF THE ASHES

1

WITH THE failure of the 1857 Rising, the last hope of India to drive out the British by the force of arms vanished. India was now outwardly at peace. The Rising had been suppressed. Those who had taken part in the revolt had been wiped out or otherwise made an example of. British prestige had been retrieved, British Raj made secure once more. To make a recurrence of the Rising impossible, the whole of British India was disarmed. No Indian could ever again be trusted completely or put in any key position, particularly in the army. A policy of division and counterpoise—balancing of community against community, Presidency against Presidency, and section against section—in the civil government, and more especially in the army, was sedulously pursued for the next twenty-five years, with the Englishman holding every key of power. The strength of the British troops in India was raised, and that of Indian correspondingly reduced. As an additional safeguard, British troops were henceforth always kept with Indian regiments in sufficient force completely to dominate the latter. The artillery was kept exclusively in European hands.

The British community hereafter regarded itself as "a garrison occupying a country", depending for its security solely on the "invincible strength of its arms" and ready at the first sign of insubordination to put it down by methods of frightfulness.[1] From 1857, observes Edward Thompson, can be traced "the widespread British belief that one European life . . . is worth the lives of innumerable Indians".

During the Revolt feudal elements represented by the Princely order and the landlord class had, on the whole, stood by the British. They had prevented the people under their influence from participating in the Rising. These elements were now to be systematically cultivated, strengthened and consolidated in the interest of British rule. Fissiparous tendencies and divisions were to be encouraged and actively promoted, and the creation and protection of a special class of vested interests dependent upon and bound up with British rule was taken in hand.

Indianisation of services had hitherto been opposed by the authorities on narrow, selfish grounds. That policy was now reversed. Indianisation of subordinate services enabled British Government to

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raise "a civil army and garrison" everywhere. These civil employees, depending for the retention of their jobs and privileges on British patronage and continuation of British rule, proved extremely pliable and willing instruments in the hands of their British masters. Docile and deferential to the rulers, they were arrogant and bullying to their subordinates and their own countrymen. They came handy as tools to exact obedience from the people at large. Indianisation of subordinate services further armed the ruling power with an enormous power of patronage which it freely used to foster divisions and rivalries among different sections and communities and to curb the spirit of independence in the more daring.

2

During the East India Company's rule, the House of Commons used to regard the Company with a healthy jealousy, as being a privileged monopoly; and the renewal of the Company's charter every twenty years automatically provided an occasion for a searching inquiry into the whole system of administration. That wholesome jealousy was dissipated when the Crown took over, and absence of a periodical inquiry removed the only check on official delinquencies or administrative defects.

The decade following the 1857 Rising was the heyday of white bureaucracy. The whole country was administratively divided into districts. At the head of each district was the District Magistrate, in practically all cases a European, combining in himself the functions of revenue collection and police, the executive and the judiciary. Each one of them was a little Czar within his jurisdiction which sometimes covered an area as big as half England. The new Government, disregardful of Indian feelings or view-point, and anxious only to maintain an efficient system of administration in the interest of foreign exploitation, relied wholly on its District heads and gave them free field. Smugly self-satisfied and power-conscious, this confraternity of officials developed a strong "Master Race" feeling, and together with the European settlers, formed a new and highly privileged caste of White Brahmins. "In the whole of human history," writes Phillip Woodruff, himself a distinguished member of the British Civil Service, "there can hardly have been another class of men so sure of themselves and of their wives, of reasonable prosperity on earth and a merciful heaven after death. They belonged to a service which gave them an assured position and the right to be themselves. . . .They were doing work they knew was good."[2]

As they grew in number with the growth of the administrative machine, they became more and more self-contained and exclusive. Between them and the educated class of Indians there was hardly any meeting-ground—ideological, cultural or social. They lived in different

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worlds, as it were, in utter ignorance of each other's motives, values and viewpoints. In the words of Woodruff,

> Between people so different there could be courtesy, kindliness and liking, there could be affection, but no dealing on equal terms. The relationship was paternal, accepted on both sides. It was fixed and settled like caste; the district officer and his family were one kind of human being, the people of his district another. There was no thought of equality.... It was easy enough for Bartle Frere to sit down by his Head Clerk on the ground and call him 'Uncle'. There was not the slightest likelihood of the elderly Brahmin calling him 'Frere, my boy'.[3]

So long as this was tacitly understood and accepted on both sides, i.e., till the 'sixties, things worked. In the 'seventies and 'eighties, however, things began to be different. Now there were everywhere large numbers of Indians who had drunk deep of English political philosophers, Mill, Bentham, Compte, Herbert Spencer and Burke; who held important positions on the bench and in the bar; edited English newspapers with distinction and successfully competed with Europeans in industry and commerce. Such men as these, urged Henry Cotton, could not be expected to "salaam" every Englishman they met in the street, to dismount from a horse or lower an umbrella when they saw him coming or remove their shoes when they entered his house.[4] The autocratic Englishman, used to the old pattern of relationship, could hardly contain his anger when he found himself confronted with Indians who claimed equality, and things happened at this time, observes Woodruff, of which "an Englishman should feel ashamed and at which an Indian has a right to feel bitter".[5]

There were cases of rude behaviour on railways by Anglo-Indian officials and European fellow-passengers towards Indians,[6] of molestation of women by British soldiers, and of Indians being injured and even killed without the assailant being brought to book or adequately punished. A Bengali gentleman was assaulted by some Europeans because he rode by on horseback while they were standing. He was removed to the hospital where he died of his injuries. Of the two assailants, one escaped and enlisted in the South African War against the Boers. The other got off with only four months' imprisonment. The coolies kicked in the stomach by Europeans only died of "ruptured spleen". In the last hundred and fifty years, Pandit Motilal Nehru, the father of present Prime Minister of India, once pointed out, not one Englishman had been convicted of murder in India.[7] Sir Henry Cotton—a high official in Bengal Civil Service, characterised the trial of these cases in which Englishmen were tried by English juries as "not falling short of judicial scandal".

The East India Company, with its monopolistic mercantile tradition, had regarded all European settlers in India with disfavour as

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"interlopers", but the Crown Government had no such inhibition. It, on the contrary, welcomed a large European population as a safeguard against another rising. A flood of European planters, businessmen, soldiers and civilians, consequently, came and settled in India with their families in the 'sixties. They brought with them the rabid anti-Indian feeling which swept over Great Britain at the time of the Revolt. The arrival of European women in large numbers made matters worse. "Among women," wrote Sir Henry Cotton, "who are more easily demoralised than men, the abuse of those 'horrid natives' is almost universal."

Some English ladies, wives of British military officers in Indian regiments, whom he had met, Cobden mentioned in one of his letters to John Bright, commonly referred to Indians as "niggers". One of them even prided herself on her "broadmindedness" because she "allowed an Indian officer to sit down in her presence when he came to her husband for orders." Such things might be bearable, he commented, if the English in India had "displayed exalted virtues and high intellectual powers",[8] but he was afraid that the reverse was the case.

3

All this added to the bitterness of racial estrangement that poisoned the Indian atmosphere after the 1857 Rising. The Queen's proclamation of 1858, redrafted by Lord Derby, her Prime Minister, on her express command that it should convey the feeling that "it was a female sovereign who spoke to more than hundred millions of Eastern people", contained two solemn assurances. It reiterated the pledge given at the time of renewal of the East India Company's charter in 1833 that no Indian would in future be excluded from any office under Crown on the ground of his race or creed.[9] And it guaranteed "to our Indian subjects" equal rights and privileges with "all our other subjects".[10]

These pledges, solemnly read out at a great Durbar, and accepted by the Indian intelligentsia at their face value, came to be regarded by them as their "Charter of Rights". It shattered their faith in British *bona fides* when later it was said that the Queen's Proclamation was meant for some moral occasion and need not be carried into ordinary application in legislation or administration, and that the words "so far as may be"[11] in it rendered the pledge of equal treatment as no longer strictly binding.

Under the last Charter Act of 1853, the principle of competitive examinations was adopted for recruitment to the Civil Service, and since 1858 Indians were permitted to enter the Covenanted Services through the competitive examination. The holding of the examinations exclusively in England put a very severe handicap on the Indians and led to a demand for simultaneous examinations in England and India, if the

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pledge of "equal treatment" was to have any meaning. But it was of no avail.

In spite of the handicap a few Indians crossed the seas and were successful in entering the Civil Service. Even this limited incursion by the Indians into what was regarded by the Europeans as their close preserve proved too much for the Government of the day[12] and in 1878, Lord Salisbury reduced the age limit for the Indian Civil Service Examinations from twenty-one years to nineteen, making it practically impossible for the Indians to compete. In 1870, as a result largely of agitation carried on in England by Dadabhai Naoroji, an Act was passed by the Parliament enabling the Government of India to nominate a limited number of Indians to certain posts hitherto reserved for the Covenanted Services, but till 1879 no serious attempt was made even to frame rules under the Act to put it into operation. It was this that had made Lord Lytton write to the Secretary of State about the acknowledged failure to fulfil fairly the promises given. (See p. 39). In 1893, Herbert Paul's resolution on simultaneous examinations for recruitment to the Covenanted Services was passed and accepted by Mr. Gladstone's Government but was defeated by the Executive Government, Lord Kimberley, Secretary of State for India, declaring that the resolution had no "moral authority" as it had been passed by a "snap vote"!

The Government of India despatch of 1894 finally gave the go-by to the simultaneous examinations and laid down that "the highest posts must for all time to come be held by Europeans". Gokhale, the distinguished Indian leader, remarked bitterly: "The pledges of equal treatment which England had given supplied us with a high and worthy ideal for our nation, and if these pledges are repudiated, one of the strongest claims of British rule to our attachment will disappear." Referring to the *obiter dictum* of an English judge, Sir Fitz-James Stephens, that "the Proclamation of 1858 was never meant to be seriously taken", he asked in despair whether they should "fling into the flames all these pledges as so much waste paper".[13]

In 1876, Lord Lytton inaugurated his reactionary regime which further added to the Indian disillusionment. There had been for some years a five per cent. import duty on all goods entering India. The Indian textile industry had then just begun to rise on the ashes of her indigenous textile hand-manufactures. The number of mills had increased from 20 in 1872-73 to 58 in 1879-80. This aroused the jealousy of the Lancashire manufacturers and they began to press for the repeal of the duty on Lancashire goods. In 1877, yielding to their clamour, the House of Commons passed a motion recommending its repeal and Lord Lytton ordered its removal in exercise of his overriding powers, in the teeth of the opposition of his own Executive Council.

In the same year the Queen assumed the title of Empress of India. There had been a series of four devastating famines between 1867 and

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1877. But while famine and pestilence stalked the land, and hundreds upon thousands were dying of hunger, Lord Lytton, to signalise assumption by the Queen of the Imperial title, held a costly Durbar and vast sums were wasted to provide a "pompous pageant to a starving people".

In the following year came the muzzling of the vernacular Press and the notorious Arms Act. There were in 1875 as many as 475 newspapers, mostly in the provincial languages. The Vernacular Press Act empowered a Magistrate to demand a bond from the publisher of any newspaper "printed in any Oriental language", taking away whatever freedom the vernacular papers enjoyed since Metcalfe had liberated the Indian Press in 1835. The Indian Arms Act forbade the carrying of arms to all in British India except Europeans, thus introducing yet another galling distinction based on colour and race, besides emasculating a whole people and rendering them incapable of self-defence. Gladstone, the Liberal leader, in a debate in the House of Commons, described the Vernacular Press Act as "a disgrace to Government". It was repealed at his instance when he became Prime Minister with Lord Ripon as Viceroy. But the Arms Act remained.

The issue of racialism came to a head during the rule of Lord Ripon (1880-84). Before 1883, under the law, Europeans could not be tried by an Indian Magistrate or an Indian Judge, unless the latter happened to be a Presidency Magistrate in a Presidency town. Once in 1872 it was proposed to change the law but the European element in the Viceroy's Council outvoted the proposed measure by seven votes against five, among the five being the Viceroy, the Commander-in-Chief, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal and the Governor of Bombay! The question was revived a decade later, when an Indian civilian, Beharilal Gupta, who as Presidency Magistrate used to try Europeans in Calcutta, was sent on a higher appointment in the mofussil and found himself deprived of the right to try Europeans. Lord Ripon thereupon decided to remove the anomaly by amending the law. Accordingly, in 1883, Sir Courtenay Ilbert, Law Member to the Government of India, introduced a Bill named after him, giving to District Magistrates and District Judges, of whatever nationality they might be, power to try the European accused. The moment the Bill was published, the European community raised an unprecedented uproar. Mr. Seton Kerr, one-time Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, in a speech that he made in London against the Ilbert Bill declared that it

> outraged the cherished conviction which was shared by every Englishman in India, from the highest to the lowest, by the planter's assistant in his lowly bungalow and by the editor in the full light of the Presidency town—from those to the Chief Commissioner in charge of an important province and to the Viceroy on his throne—the conviction in every man that he belongs to a race whom God has destined to govern and subdue.[14]

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In Calcutta, the Viceroy was insulted and hooted at various public gatherings of Europeans and his state arrival was made the occasion of a demonstration by the European and Anglo-Indian community. When the Viceregal carriage arrived at a place where a mob of Europeans and Anglo-Indians had collected, nobody removed his hat. Government House functions were boycotted by the English community generally, and at St. Andrew's Dinner, "the toast of the Viceroy was received in silence and not drunk".[15] Some hotheads in Calcutta formed a conspiracy in the event of Government adhering to the proposed legislation, "to overpower the sentries at Government House, put the Viceroy on board a steamer at Chandpal Ghat, and deport him to England round the Cape."[16] European planters took pledges that they would not accept the Bill if it became law, but "would deal in their own way with the first native magistrate who presumed to try a European."[17]

To crown it all, after the Viceroy had been insulted and boycotted, a "compromise" was reached by which the European community got the right of being tried by a jury half the number of which should be Europeans.

There are two possible solutions, observes Wilhelm Dibelius, to the relation between ruler and ruled. One is the assimilation of the ruled to their conquerors, the other is paternalistic promotion of the material welfare of the dependent people in every way "subject to the maintenance of a sharp line of distinction between two social classes, never to be obliterated."[18] The first represented the goal of British statesmanship, the second reflected the outlook of the average Englishman. The conflict between the two created an anomalous situation. A young man, who returned after winning the highest academic degree with distinction from Cambridge and Oxford, found that with all his qualifications he could be admitted only to the outer courts of the Temple. All key-positions were beyond his reach. If in the Army, he could not rise higher than the so-called Viceroy's Commission and no Englishman could be put under his command. Till the First European War, his position was "scarcely above that of a glorified N.C.O., and he was junior to the youngest subaltern."[19]

"It is this consciousness of the inherent superiority of the European," Lord Roberts stated,

> which has won for us India. However well-educated and clever a native may be, and however brave he may have proved himself, I believe that no rank which we can bestow upon him would cause him to be considered as an equal by the British Officer.[20]

An Indian might be rich, wealthy and cultured, hold a high administrative or judicial post and be received by the Viceroy with honour, but the doors of the clubs thrown wide to every English subaltern were closed in his face. Socially, he still remained "a dirty nigger".[21] Indian

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Universities on modern lines were established in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras in 1858. Macaulay's "filtration theory" had by that time worn thin. Racialism killed it. In nine cases out of ten, the educated Indian elite instead of becoming zealous apostles of the new order became determined opponents of British rule from the bottom of their heart.

4

The rise of the nationalist sentiment is the inevitable consequence of foreign rule. The unsuccessful Rising of 1857 had resulted in rivetting the manacles of India's subjection firmer and faster. It had enabled the British to consolidate their position. Their roots were struck deeper and wider and they were now more firmly established than ever. Racial arrogance was never more rampant. India was bled white. Even her legendary bounty of nature was becoming exhausted. The realisation slowly forced itself upon the Indian mind that only by dint of combination, more comprehensive and thorough than had hitherto been possible and development of their internal strength by mass awakening, organisation and training for political action, could they win back their lost independence. Running through the activities and utterances of all leaders of Indian Renaissance from Raja Ram Mohun Roy onward, was the surge of Indian independence. Under the quickening effect of the ideas of Western democracy and freedom, and historic events like the American War of Independence and the French Revolution, the educated youth of India had begun to feel more and more the corroding effect of subjection on national character. About Raja Ram Mohun Roy an English friend of his wrote that "love of freedom was perhaps the strongest passion of his soul. . . . He would be free or not at all." He laid the greatest stress on the close relationship between social reform and political progress.

Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, on whom Raja Ram Mohun Roy's mantle fell, was from birth a contemplative. But the inherent contradiction between spirituality and subjection kept haunting him. "Subjection is the root of all evil," he declared, "without freedom prosperity and happiness are impossible." Even his insistence on the study of the *Upanishads* and exclusive use of the mother tongue was rooted in his intense national idealism.

Keshub Chunder Sen was the most westernised of the Heralds of the New Dawn. But with all his admiration for British institutions and culture, or to be more correct, on that very account, he felt impelled in one of his speeches in England bluntly to warn the English people that they must not try to crush down India's millions or to destroy their nationality....If you cannot govern India properly, she will not be long in your

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hands....If England's object in governing India is simply to make money, then I say, perish British rule this moment.

Shibnath Sastry, a pillar of the Brahmo Samaj and a contemporary of Keshub Chunder, organised a party whose aim was to recognise "no other form of government than self-government as the only God-ordained way of ruling the country". One of the members of this party was Bepin Chandra Pal, who later became one of the prophets of Indian nationalism.

Among the idealistic spirits, whom Debendranath Tagore drew around him, was Babu Rajnarayan Bose (1836-1899), grandfather of Aurobindo Ghosh on the mother's side, popularly known as Rishi Rajnarayan. A teacher by profession, he by the force of his personality and character moulded the lives of hundreds of youths who came under his influence. He had himself been a victim of the cultural assault that came in the wake of western education. To counteract its denationalising trends, he set about to establish a society called "Jatiya Gaurabechcha Sancharini Sabha" (Society for the Propagation of Nationalism).

The prospectus of the society was published in 1861, a notable year in Indian history, which saw the birth not only of Indian nationalism but also of a galaxy of Indian .nation builders—Dr. P. C. Ray and Pandit Motilal Nehru, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and the Poet Rabindranath Tagore. Indian national reconstruction could have no meaning, Rajnarayan declared, until India was politically free: "Our nationalism will be worth while only when it is based on a profounder sense of independence."

The objects of the proposed society included the physical training of youth; publication of books for diffusion of knowledge about the glories of ancient India; encouraging the study of Sanskrit; making the use exclusively of his mother tongue the rule for every son of the soil; promotion of the study of indigenous medicine and other sciences; and revival of customs, manners and institutions calculated to "foster national feelings which would lead to the formation of national character". "India is our motherland," wrote Rajnarayan, "we will serve her even at the cost of our life. We will join hands with Muslims and other Indians as far as possible in politics and other matters. We will inspire the whole race to recover the same high state in body, mind, society, religion, customs, morals, arts and sciences as it had in ancient India; we will aspire to rise to an even higher state than the highest in the past."

In 1867, Navagopal Mitra, the editor of the *National Paper* started by Debendranath two years earlier, in consultation with Rajnarayan, organised the Jatiya Mela (National Conference) for the "promotion of unity and self-help among Indians through the cultivation and growth of national consciousness". The Mela met annually for about twelve years in Calcutta and its suburbs.

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Three years later, in 1870, a Jatiya Sabha or National Society was started. It held monthly meetings where lectures were delivered by competent persons on art, literature, philosophy, science and technology, having a bearing on the promotion of national life and national welfare. At its fourth meeting, Rajnarayan in his famous paper *Sekal ar Ekal* ("Then and Now"), while presenting a realistic picture of the decadence that had overtaken Bengal in every sphere of activity after the introduction of English education, pointed out that even in her decadence she had achieved great things—especially in the field of religion and politics—that had put her in the vanguard of national progress. This showed to what height she could rise given the opportunity.

The Mela became a powerful factor in the development of a common national consciousness. National songs were especially composed for the occasion and sung in the Mela by Satyendranath Tagore, Rabindranath Tagore's brother; Gunendranath, his nephew, who became the first Secretary of the Mela; and the Poet's eldest brother Dwijendranath, who on Gunendranath's death succeeded him as the Secretary. Rabindranath, then fifteen, composed a poem called "Bharat" which he recited at the Mela. He also sang a song of his own.

Within five years of the inception of the Mela, the national life of Bengal was transformed. "A great change is taking place in the minds of the educated youths of Bengal," wrote the *National Paper*, "the tide of denationalisation has turned."

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5

Soul-stirrers w re they—these precursors of Indian nationalism. They conceived India's social and spiritual regeneration as the first step in her political liberation, and to that task they devoted themselves exclusively. Their labours galvanised the politics of the country.

The pioneer political organisation of India, the British Indian Association with branches in Madras, Bombay and Calcutta, had been founded between 1851 and 1857. Being primarily a landlord organisation, it was concerned largely with the grievances of the landed gentry. Need, therefore, was felt for a more popular body, and it was superseded before long by the Bengal National League, established jointly by Sisir Kumar Ghosh, the well-known publicist, founder and first editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*; and Ananda Mohan Bose, the first Indian Senior Wrangler of Cambridge University.

This body was in its turn superseded by the Indian Association founded in 1876 by Surendranath Banerjee. Happily for the country and himself, as it proved to be, he had recently been discharged from the Civil Service. In the following year he on behalf of the Association undertook a propaganda tour through Northern India to mobilise public opinion against the reduction of the age limit for the Civil Service

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Examinations by Lord Salisbury. He was present at Lord Lytton's Durbar in 1877, as the representative of the *Hindu Patriot*. It was this Durbar that suggested to him the idea of an all-India national gathering for the political advancement of the country. If princes and nobles in the land could be forced to form a pageant for the glorification of an autocratic Viceroy, he asked himself, why could not people also be brought together to restrain by constitutional means the autocratic spirit of the rulers. Thus was conceived the idea of the Indian National Congress.

About the same time as the British Indian Association of Calcutta, the Bombay Association was founded in the Western Presidency, largely through the efforts of Dadabhai Naoroji. It did not survive the decade for long and in the early eighteen-eighties fell into a moribund condition.

In Maharashtra, the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha was formed in 1870. The moving spirit behind it was Sita Ram Hari Chiplunkar, the veteran educationist and nationalist of that region, who, with Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Agarkar, became the co-founder of the Maharashtra's premier vernacular journal *The Kesari*, and of *The Mahratta*. *The Hindu* started in 1878 by a number of distinguished men of Southern India, with its illustrious editor Subramania Iyer, became the pioneer of public life in the Madras Presidency.

All these organisations, that preceded the birth of the Indian National Congress, confined themselves more or less to local problems. Their activity did not go beyond occasional criticism of important administrative or legislative measures affecting their respective provinces; constructive policy they had none; the conception of concerted political activity in its wider sense was not yet born; and there was no definite political goal. The economic condition of the masses was becoming more and more straitened and they were already beginning to lose hope.

A yeoman service at this juncture to the cause of Indian nationalism was rendered by a number of English friends—Cobden and John Bright, Charles Bradlaugh, Henry Fawcett and Gladstone in England; and British Indian officials like Sir W. W. Hunter, who became editor of the Indian section of the London *Times*; Sir Henry Cotton in Bengal; Sir William Wedderburn in Bombay; and A. O. Hume in the North Western Province. The outspoken utterances of these large-hearted Englishmen, and their exertions in India's behalf kept alive the spark of hope in the Indian breast when the horizon was the darkest, and prevented the spirit of her nascent nationalism from drooping, or frustration leading to bitterness and despair. They made possible the final reconciliation between India and England.

The clouds that had been gathering during Lord Lytton's rule were dispelled under Lord Ripon. Repeal by him of the Vernacular Press Act, promotion of Local Self-Government by extending the

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elective principle and by permitting unofficial chairmen in the Municipalities, his courageous stand on the issue of racial equality, and the obloquy that was heaped upon him by a section of his own countrymen during the Ilbert Bill episode made him the beloved of the people. His departure from India at the end of his rule became the occasion for unprecedented popular demonstrations, which made Sir Auckland Colvin, the Indian Finance Minister, exclaim: "If it be real, what does it mean?"[22] "It means," commented *The Pioneer*, which had the reputation of being a mouthpiece of the bureaucracy, "the greatest possible danger to the British Raj in this country. We must behave carefully and we must also behave with firmness."[23]

At the farewell meeting, Lord Ripon, deeply stirred by the overflowing affection of the people .manifested in the piles of addresses, caskets and souvenirs that from the tables almost touched the ceiling, let himself go. In a remarkable speech of an hour's duration, he lashed out at those who had tried to minimise the significance of the British declarations promising racial equality and equality of opportunity to all under the British Crown:

> To me it seems a very serious thing to put forth to the people of India a doctrine which renders worthless the solemn words of their Sovereign and which converts Her gracious promises, which Her Indian subjects have cherished for a quarter of a century, into a hollow mockery, as meaningless as the compliments which form the invariable opening of an oriental letter....
>
> The doctrine, therefore, to which Sir Fitz-James Stephen has given the sanction of his authority, I feel bound to repudiate to the utmost of my power. It seems to me to be inconsistent with the character of my Sovereign and with the honour of my country, and, if it were once to be received and acted upon by the Government of England, it would do more than anything else could possibly do to strike at the root of our power and to destroy our just influence, because that power and influence rest upon the conviction of our good faith more than upon any other foundation, aye, more than upon the valour of our soldiers and the reputation of our arms.[24]

Lord Ripon's liberal regime filled the Indian breast with a new hope and marked another milestone in the progress of the nationalist movement in India. Almost simultaneously with the close of the Ilbert Bill agitation, the idea began to take hold of the people's minds in different parts of the country that vigorous, sustained, concerted action must take the place of sporadic, isolated activity, such as had up till then been pursued by the different provinces independently of one another, if political advancement was to be achieved, and for this they must unite under a common standard. In 1883, at the instance of the Indian Association, a National Conference was accordingly held in Calcutta. It was at this meeting that Surendranath Banerjee put forth the idea of having an all-India organisation for furthering the nation's cause

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on the model of Lord Lytton's assemblage. In the following year the Bengal National League was established under the leadership of Sir Jatindra Mohan Tagore. The League put in the forefront of its programme the question of representative institutions for India.

In Madras the Mahajan Sabha was established early in 1881 under the auspices of the leading public men who had started the premier English daily of South India, *The Hindu*, three years before. Bombay, since the collapse of the old Bombay Association, had become politically a Sleepy Hollow. Under the impetus of the new movement the Bombay Presidency Association was started on January 31, 1885, by Pherozeshah Mehta, the Hon. Kashinath Trimbak Telang and the Hon. Badruddin Tyebji—the distinguished 'triumvirate' that had directed in those early years the public life of the Western Presidency.

India was ripe for the establishment of a central organisation for the advancement of nationalism.

6

History is replete with instances of *declasse* people who, combining the experience and conservative wisdom of the old order with the idealism and dynamism of the new, became the spearhead of a revolution against the order which they represented, when they found it had become unjust and oppressive. Such were Danton and Mirabeau in the French Revolution and several of the leaders of the Russian Revolution of October 1917. Allan Octavian Hume (1829-1912)—"Father of the Indian National Congress", was another such.

Distinguished son of a distinguished father, Joseph Hume (1777-1855), who started his Indian career in the grand old days of the John Company's rule, "when Proconsuls became Nabobs and the humblest officials in the service of the Company had frequent opportunities of indulging in the pastime of 'shaking the Pagoda tree' ", Allan Octavian Hume joined the Bengal Civil Service in 1849. During the 1857 Rising, he distinguished himself by his courage, tact and devotion to duty. Appointed Secretary to the Government of India in Lord Mayo's time in 1879, he was removed from that post three years later because of his habit of unhesitatingly opposing any policy, that he believed to be wrong, without regard to what might be the wishes or intentions of his superiors. As the district head he distinguished himself by his untiring exertion in the cause of popular education and police reform and by his impassioned denunciation of *Abkaree*, i.e., revenue derived from the Liquor Traffic as "the wages of sin":

> I protest against the present iniquitous system which first produced and now supports a large class whose sole interest it is to seduce their fellows into drunkenness and its necessary concomitants, debauchery and

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crime. . . .While we debauch our subjects we do not even pecuniarily derive any profit from their ruin. Of this revenue, the wages of sin, it may. . . be truly said that illgotten wealth never thrives, and for every rupee additional that the *Abkaree* yields, two at least are lost to the public by crime, and spent by the Government in suppressing it. . . .I have no doubt whatsoever that if I be spared a few years longer I shall live to see effaced in a more Christian-like system one of the greatest existing blots on our government of India.

He retired from service in 1882, settled down in India and identified himself with the Indian people, living among them as one of themselves. Known among his friends as "The Pope of Ornithology", he expended on the publication of a monumental study of his, *Game Birds of India*, £ 4,000 out of his own pocket. He spent another £ 20,000 in accumulating an ornithological museum and library, "the largest in the world, where Asiatic birds were concerned," which he bequeathed to the Indian Government.

Some time before his retirement, Hume came in possession of evidence, which convinced him that a situation fraught with grave peril obtained in India. The costly and inefficient legal system, introduced by the British, totally unsuited to Indian temperament and incapable of meeting Indian needs, the corrupt and oppressive policy, the rigid, unsympathetic revenue system, and the galling administration of the Forest Act and the Arms Act had given rise to complaints "not loud but deep" all around by the multitude. These "ill-starred measures" combined with "Russian methods of police repression", records Sir William Wedderburn, Hume's biographer and himself an official, had brought India under Lord Lytton "within a measurable distance" of a revolutionary outbreak. The masses of the peasantry, "scourged by poverty, pestilence and famine" were beginning to give way to despair, while the mind of the younger generation was "stirred up by vague dreams of revolutionary and even violent change". The existing Government was dangerously out of touch with the masses. There existed no recognised channel of communication between the rulers and the ruled, and no constitutional means of keeping the officials and administrators informed of the conditions, feelings and grievances of the people. "The physical suffering of the many, acted on by the intellectual discontent of the few, was rapidly bringing popular discontent to a danger point." Hume felt that a safety valve must be provided for the suppressed discontent of the masses; and something must be done to relieve their despair, if a disaster was to be averted.

The evidence that convinced him of the imminence of the danger was contained in "seven large. . .volumes containing a vast number of entries . . . from over thirty thousand different reporters". These entries, based on communications from *chelas* or disciples to their *gurus* or

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religious heads, bore the stamp of unimpeachable authenticity. For no *chela*, bound to his *guru* by vows and sworn to absolute secrecy, would deceive his religious head. "What a real *chela* says to his *guru* you may accept as the absolute truth, so far as the speaker is concerned. He may be mistaken, he cannot lie."[25] Many of the entries "reported conversations between men of the lowest classes, all going to show that these poor men were pervaded with a sense of the hopelessness of the existing state of affairs; that they were convinced that they would starve and starve and die, and that they wanted to do *something* . . . and that something meant violence." Innumerable entries referred to the secretion of "old swords, spears and matchlocks, which would be ready when required".[26]

It was not supposed, comments Sir William, that the immediate result in its initial stages would be a revolt against the Government, or a revolt at all in the proper sense of the word. "What was predicted was a sudden violent outbreak of sporadic crimes, murders of obnoxious persons, robbing of bankers, looting of bazars." The forecast of trouble throughout India further was, according to Sir William's account, in exact accordance with what had actually occurred under his own observation in the Bombay Presidency, in connection with the agrarian rising known as the Deccan Riots. "These began with sporadic gang robberies and attacks on the moneylenders, until the bands of dacoits, combining together, became too strong for the police; and the whole military force at Poona, horse, foot and artillery, had to take the field against them."[27]

Some of the religious heads who had come in contact with Hume told him that unless men like him who had access to Government could do something to remove the general feeling of despair, the ominous unrest, which pervaded even the lowest strata of the population throughout the country "would lead to some terrible outbreak.... 'The jungle is all dry,' they said, 'fire does spread wonderfully in such when the right wind blows, and it is blowing now, and hard.' "[28]

Having been through something similar to this, though on a smaller scale, in the 1857 Rising, Hume had not a shadow of a doubt left "that we were then truly in extreme danger of a most terrible revolution". As he wrote in his famous letter to Sir Auckland Colvin, "A safety-valve for the escape of great and growing forces, generated by our own action, was urgently needed and no more efficacious safety-valve than . . . Congress movement could possibly be devised." He decided to act.

Accordingly, in 1883, in his famous circular letter addressed to the "graduates of the Calcutta University" he appealed for "fifty men good and true" to come forward and form a body of founders dedicated to the task of moral, social and political regeneration of the country.

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If only fifteen men, good and true, can be found to join as founders, the thing can be established....You are the salt of the land. And if amongst even you, the elite, fifty men cannot be found with sufficient power of self-sacrifice, sufficient love for and pride in their country, sufficient genuine and unselfish heartfelt patriotism to take the initiative and if needs be, devote the rest of their lives to the Cause, then there is no hope for India. Her sons must and will remain mere humble and helpless instruments in the hands of foreign rulers, for 'they would be free, *themselves* must strike the blow'. And if even the leaders of thought are all either such poor creatures, or so selfishly wedded to personal concerns that they dare not or will not strike a blow for their country's sake, then justly and rightly are they kept down and trampled on, for they deserve nothing better....If you, the picked men, the most highly educated of the nation, cannot, scorning personal ease and selfish objects, make a resolute struggle to secure greater freedom for yourselves and your country...then we your friends are wrong, and our adversaries right;...then, at present, at any rate, all hopes of progress are at an end, and India truly neither lacks nor deserves any better government than she now enjoys....[29]

Hume's appeal evoked a wide response all over the country and the idea of forming the Indian National Union began to take shape. His plan originally was to confine the scope of the proposed Union to social work, leaving political activity to be taken up by the existing provincial organisations like the Presidency Association of Bombay, the Indian Association of Bengal, and the Mahajan Sabha of Madras. But Lord Dufferin (1884-1888), whom he consulted, set forth the view that there was not any group of persons in India who could perform the functions which Her Majesty's opposition performed in England. He, as the head of the Government, had found the greatest difficulty in ascertaining the real wishes of the people, and the newspapers were no reliable guide. He, therefore, thought that it would be very desirable in the interests as well of the rulers as of the ruled, if there existed some responsible organisation by which the Government might be kept informed regarding the best Indian public opinion and which would point out to the Government in what respects the administration was defective and how it could be improved. Being asked by Hume whether they should not get Lord Reay, Governor of Bombay, to preside over the first Congress as a token of their desire to work in the closest cooperation with the authorities, he advised against it as "in his presence, the people might not like to speak out their minds". He further made it a condition that his name in connection with the scheme of the Congress should not be divulged so long as he remained in the country.[30]

Impressed by Dufferin's argument, Hume placed the two schemes, his own and Lord Dufferin's, before the leading politicians of the country. They unanimously accepted the latter. The

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Indian National Union was accordingly formed towards the close of 1884. A preliminary report issued to the members stated that the Union was "absolutely unanimous in insisting that unswerving loyalty to the British Crown shall be the key-note of the institution", and that it was prepared "when necessary to oppose, by all constitutional methods, all authorities, high or low, here or in England, whose acts or omissions are opposed to those principles of the Government of India laid down from time to time by the British Parliament, and endorsed by the British Sovereign." But it held "the continued affiliation of India to Great Britain, at any rate for a period far exceeding the range of any practical political forecast, to be *absolutely essential* to the interests of our own National Development."[31] In March, 1885, it was decided by the Union to hold a meeting of the representatives from all parts of India at the forthcoming Christmas at Poona, to be later known as the Indian National Congress.

7

Owing to the appearance of cholera, the venue of the first meeting of the Congress, that was to be held at the ensuing Christmas eve at Poona, had to be shifted to Bombay. Seventy-two public men, representing "the aristocracy of intellect" had arrived from all parts of the country as self-elected representatives to participate in the Conference. They were met, on the evening before the Conference, by some of the leading officials and distinguished citizens of Bombay. Among them were the Hon. Justice Jardine, Col. Phelps, Prof. Wordsworth, and the Hon. Sir William Wedderburn, who after his retirement identified himself with the Congress, serving it not only by his talents but his purse also.

The Conference met in the spacious hall of the Tejpal Gokuldas College on December 28, 1885, at noon. Prominent among the delegates was Dadabhai Naoroji in his Parsi headgear, slim and short-statured but colossal in intellect, his serene, bespectacled countenance, with its sensitively chiselled features, shining like a carved piece of ivory. From among the rising stars of the Western Presidency, there were Pherozeshah Muncherji Mehta, Kashinath Trimbak Telang, Narayan Ganesh Chandavarkar and Dinshaw Wacha, Secretary of the Bombay Presidency Association, who afterwards attained fame as a veteran statistician. Calcutta was represented by W. C. Bonnerjee with his tall, graceful form, broad forehead and beaming countenance. From Poona there were Gopal Ganesh Agarkar and Chiplunkar, the Secretary of the Sarvajanik Sabha of Poona. Madras was represented by G. Subramania Iyer of *The Hindu*, noted for his masterly grip of public questions and his trenchant pen. About his leading articles in *The Hindu*, Hume wrote that they would have done honour to the London *Times*. The Muslim community was represented by Rahimtulla Sayani.

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"Observed of all observers" was A. O. Hume, "Father of the Congress". He had not hesitated to decline the offer of a Lieutenant Governorship as his passion was only to serve the people, and neither he nor his wife cared much for feting and entertaining, which formed such a large part of the gubernatorial ceremonial. When Lord Lytton recommended him for Home Membership and a K.C.S.I., his name was rejected by Lord Salisbury on the ground that he (Hume) was "stiffening Lord Northbrooke against the repeal of the cotton duties" on Lancashire goods.[32]

Among the distinguished visitors present at the inauguration of the Indian National Congress were the Hon. Mahadeva Govinda Ranade, member of the Bombay Legislative Council and Judge, Small Cause Court, Poona, who later became Judge of the Bombay High Court, and R. G. Bhandarkar of the Deccan College, perhaps India's foremost Sanskritist and Oriental scholar.

Journalist, economist and a passionate advocate of education for women was Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917), first and foremost among Congress patriarchs. An ardent social reformer and supporter of the temperance movement he had led an uncompromising crusade against the immoral opium trade and tirelessly laboured to create organised public life in India for forty years before the birth of the Congress. He was thrice elected as the President of the Indian National Congress, and lived to be universally revered by his countrymen as the Grand Old Man of India.

Beginning as "Head Native Assistant Master" of the Elphinstone School, Bombay, where he later became Assistant Professor of Mathematics and Natural History, he in 1855 joined as a partner in the firm of Camas, the pioneer Indian business concern in England. But before long he resigned the partnership because he could not, he says, persuade himself to pocket the earnings of dealing in opium, wine and spirits "which led to the degradation and ruin of thousands of human beings."[33] In 1874 he was appointed Minister in the Baroda State and in 1885 was nominated as an additional member of the Bombay Legislative Council. Standing as a Liberal candidate for Parliament from the Central Finsbury constituency in 1892, he was rocketted into fame when Lord Salisbury, the Conservative Prime Minister of England referring to him in one of his speeches during the election as a "black man", asked whether a British constituency would elect such a man as its representative. Lord Salisbury was pilloried for his "blazing indiscretion" by John Morley and the "black man" was returned to Parliament, defeating his Conservative opponent by a narrow majority, which earned him in his community the affectionate nick-name of "Narrowji".

In 1901 appeared his monumental work—*The Poverty and Un-British Rule in India.* In it with infinite patient research, he laid bare the anatomy of India's poverty and its relation to the "drain" of wealth from

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India. He lived to the ripe age of ninety-two. Gopal Krishna Gokhale eulogised him as "the foremost Indian of our time, a man without self and without stain, our aged chief, who bears on his head the snow of years but carries in his heart the fire of youth."

Pherozeshah Mehta and W. C. Bonnerjee were both luminaries of the legal profession before they joined the Congress. The philanthropy of a wealthy Parsi gentleman, Rustumji Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, son of a baronet, who made a fortune during the American Civil War, enabled them to qualify for the Bar. Jejeebhoy had set apart a huge sum to be given in scholarships every year to young men of ability and character desirous of proceeding to England to study for the Bar, Pherozeshah Mehta and W. C. Bonnerjee being the two recipients of these scholarships for the year.

Pherozeshah, nick-named, by a play upon his name, "Ferocious" by his compatriots, for his dauntless courage, was the soul of the Bombay Corporation. Aristocratic by habit and of imperious temperament, he was a life-long member of the Bombay Legislative Council from 1893 onwards, and for a number of years the real power behind the Congress. It was a Liberal British M.P. who, referring to him in the columns of the *Manchester Guardian*, wrote that he "would be the first man in the political kingdom in any country".[34]

Equal to Pherozeshah Mehta in all respects and perhaps his superior in one respect, inasmuch as he always preferred to remain in the background, W. C. Bonnerjee was the Doyen of the Calcutta Bar and the first Indian Standing Counsel in a Chartered High Court. He was immensely successful in his legal practice and became so rich that he built himself a fine house in Croydon, where he with his family usually spent six months in the year. He gave out of his earnings from ten to twenty thousand rupees every year to finance Congress activities in England.

Kashinath Trimbak Telang, educationist, lawyer and politician, was a skilled debater, and a profound scholar, with a razor-sharp intellect. He rapidly rose to the position of a leader of the Bar, was appointed a member of the Indian Education Commission when he was thirty-two, and became a member of the Bombay Legislative Council three years later. At the age of thirty-nine he was made a Judge of the High Court and Vice-Chancellor of Bombay University two years before his death, which occurred when he was only forty-three. As a protagonist of, what came to be called, the "Telang School of Thought", he held a position in India's public life all its own.

The opening of the Conference was a solemn and imposing spectacle—a unique event in India's history, inaugurating the birth of a new epoch. The first voices heard were those of A. O. Hume, Subramaniam Iyer and K. T. Telang, who respectively proposed, seconded and supported the election of the first President, W. C. Bonnerjee. The

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Presidential address was one of the briefest in Congress history. It defined the four-fold Congress objective as being the promotion of personal intimacy and friendship amongst all the more earnest workers in the country's cause in the various parts of the Empire; "the eradication of all possible race, creed or provincial prejudice amongst all lovers of our country", and the development and consolidation of those sentiments of national unity, "that had its origin in their beloved Lord Ripon's ever memorable reign"; authoritatively to record the matured opinion of the educated classes in India on some of the more important and pressing of the social questions of the day; and determination of the lines and methods of work for the coming year.

The Congress passed nine resolutions, covering a wide range of subjects such as appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the working of the Indian administration, abolition of the India Council, introduction of the elected element in the Legislative Councils, in which all members were hitherto nominated, right of interpellation, creation of Councils in the Provinces in which they were not yet introduced, and setting up of a Standing Committee in the House of Commons to consider formal protests from majorities in the Councils. Other subjects covered were holding of examinations simultaneously in India and in England for the I.C.S., and raising the age of candidates, the extravagant military expenditure, and the annexation of Upper Burmah, and its incorporation in India.

The three-day session ended with the customary vote of thanks to the President, followed by "three cheers for Mr. Hume", which he continued to receive from that time onward as an "annual tribute" at every session of the Congress until his death. There was an outburst of loyal enthusiasm when Hume in turn called: "Three times three cheers for Her Majesty the Queen Empress".

The second Congress was held in Calcutta on December 28, 1886. It was presided over by Dadabhai Naoroji. Among the valuable additions to the Congres ranks during the year were Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya, and Raja Rajendralal Mitra. *The Statesman*, the leading Anglo-Indian daily of Calcutta, reviewing the session wrote that the Congress was composed of "men whom we can point with pride as the outcome of a century of our rule", but the London *Times* declared that the Congress was "mainly an affair of discontented place-seekers, men of straw, with little or no stake in the country". Delegates from all these "talking clubs", it warned, "might become a serious danger to public tranquillity".

After the Congress, the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, received some of the members, not, however, as delegates but as "distinguished guests to the capital". He also invited them to a garden party. The compliment was repeated next year when the third Congress met under Badruddin Tyebji's presidentship in Madras. Lord Connemora, the Governor, was

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personally desirous of attending it. But he accepted Lord Dufferin's advice and decided instead to receive the delegates at the Government House. It was a brilliant function. Sumptuous refreshments were served to the guests, the Governor's own band being in attendance.

The fourth session of the Congress was held in Allahabad under the Presidentship of George Yule, a leading merchant of Calcutta, and the fifth in Bombay, with Sir William Wedderburn as President. It was in this year that Gopal Krishna Gokhale joined the Congress. Among those who attended the fifth session of the Congress was Charles Bradlaugh. At the end of the session addresses were presented to him on behalf of all parts of the country. Thus, from its very start, the Congress had associated with it a series of sympathetic Englishmen. This constituted the surest guarantee that its fight was to be not with the English people but with English rule.

8

From its very inception the Congress sought to represent all classes and sections of the people irrespective of caste, creed or religion. Thus the President of the first Congress was a Hindu, of the second a Parsee, of the third a Muslim, and that of the fourth and the fifth respectively Englishmen. The first Congress was attended by only two Muslims, the second by 33. At the sixth, Muslims numbered 156 out of the total 702, or 22 per cent.

The authorities had thought that the Congress would prove to be a temporary ebullition, a passing phase. But despite their black looks and determined opposition, sometimes hardly disguised, it met year after year and progressed from strength to strength. In 1885 the number of representatives attending it was 72. In 1886 the figure rose to 436; to 607 in 1887 and to 1,208 in 1888. At the fifth Congress in 1889 the number of delegates was exactly 1,889.

All this was not to the liking of the bureaucracy. Though the Congress had started with the friendly sympathy of the highest authorities, as it gathered strength and began to adopt a vigorous line of policy, it lost their favour completely and was even dubbed "seditious". Hume, with his heart afire to alleviate the misery of the masses, finding that there was no sign of any concessions coming even after three years of petitioning, decided to launch a vigorous mass propaganda after the model of the Anti-Corn-Law-League's campaign in England to bring home to the authorities the urgency of the situation. In pursuance of his plan, appeals were issued for funds. Over one thousand meetings were held throughout the country, many of these meetings being attended by over five thousand men; and arrangements were made for the distribution of half a million pamphlets for propaganda.

The authorities took fright. Lord Dufferin disowned all connection

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with the Congress and characterised the proposal for the separation of the judiciary from the executive functions, for which the Congress had pressed, as a "counsel of perfection". Speaking at St. Andrews dinner in Calcutta, before his departure from India in 1888, he belittled the educated class that supported the Congress as "a microscopic minority", and described the ultimate ambition of the Congress in regard to the application to India of democratic methods of government and the adoption of a parliamentary system, "which England herself has reached by slow degrees, and through the discipline of many centuries", as "a very big jump into the unknown". He ended by calling the demand for representative institutions "eminently unconstitutional".[35]

At the fourth session of the Congress that was held in Allahabad, all kinds of difficulties were placed in the way of its being held there at all. They could get no site even for putting up its tents. Sir Auckland Colvin, the Governor, joined hands with Sir Syed Ahmed and together they organised "Anti-Congress United Patriotic Association" in opposition to the Congress. Sir Syed asked his co-religionists to keep aloof from the Congress. But of this more later.

Sir Auckland had, until the new line of policy that was adopted following the third Congress, been distinctly sympathetic to the Congress movement. While still, more or less, in sympathy with the principles and the general object of the Congress, he now suggested that the Congress should devote its attention to social reform and avoid politics, perhaps not aware that that had been Hume's original plan, and had been modified so as to include politics on the advice of Lord Dufferin himself. He considered that the mass propaganda launched by the Congress was premature; that its "aggressive and denunciatory methods" were "mischievous" and bound to excite hatred of the Government and the officials; that agitation by Congress would lead to counter-agitation and split the country into nationalist and loyalist camps; and that the Congress "unfairly claimed to represent the Indian population".

Hume answered these points in his famous letter to Sir Auckland Colvin. The correspondence between the two was later published as a pamphlet under the title *Audi Alteram Partem* (Look at the other side of the deed). In it, Hume pointed out that the hatred was already there and required to be assuaged, that any counter-agitation would be taken up only by "a small knot of Anglo-Indians, mostly officials, . . . a few Indian fossils, honest but wanting in understanding . . . and . . . time-servers." Muslims were "as intelligent as, and more democratic than, anyone else", and in their antipathy to the Congress were only being used by "a few ill-advised officials who clung to the pestilent doctrine of *Divide et Impera*" and "unfriends" of the Government. "The wretched plea about the Mahomedans being so inferior to the Hindus

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that they will have no chance if a fair field is conceded to all classes and sects is monstrous." Mentioning Sir Salar Jung, Badruddin Tyebji and Justice Syed Mahmud as instances in point, he characterised the whole thing as "a shameful libel on the Mussalmans, who, alike in times past and present, have ever held and ever will hold their own, and . . . will ever obtain, in virtue of their hereditary capacity, energy and pluck, a full and fair share."

As for the claim of the Congress to represent the whole population, he asked how this could be questioned when in England, the Mother of Parliaments, less than ten per cent. of the population took part in the parliamentary elections, even in such advanced constituencies as the city and county of Aberdeen.[36]

Hume ended by appealing to Sir Auckland, who still looked upon "our Government through the rose-tinted official spectacles that so long obscured my sight", to "leave the service, become a nobody, mix freely with the people, hear what they have to say when not afraid to speak their minds, study the reverse of the shield, and, knowing you as I do, I know well that you would wholly change your views."[37]

His appeal fell on deaf ears. Like the Bourbons at the close of the eighteenth century, the authorities had "neither eyes to see nor ears to hear". Seven invitation cards that were as before sent to the Viceroy's household at the sixth Congress held in Calcutta, under the Presidentship of Pherozeshah Mehta, were returned on the ground that the Government officials were not. permitted to attend political gatherings.[38] At the same time the Government of Bengal issued a circular to all Secretaries and heads of departments under it, pointing out that under the orders of the Government of India, the presence of Government officials "even as visitors at such meetings is not advisable, and that their taking part in the proceedings of any such meetings is absolutely prohibited."[39]

9

The bureaucracy of British officials with its domineering habits and the tradition of unquestioning obedience, developed into a vast, powerful vested interest. Unsympathetic and unimaginative, cut off from the people by its racial exclusiveness, suspicious of knowledge and averse to innovation, it showed a remarkable knack of defeating in detail what was granted in principle.[40]

Under the Councils Act of 1861, some Indians used to be included both in the Central as well as the Provincial Councils. They were all nominated. The Executive Council itself was little more than an advisory body, the Viceroy having the power to overrule its decisions. They were derided by the nationalists as "gilded shams" and their nominated members as "magnificent nonentities"—an epithet they fully lived

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up to. Some of them, for instance, who had voted for the Vernacular Press Act under Lord Lytton, faithfully voted for its repeal under Lord Ripon![41] There were of course exceptions. Vishwanath Narayan Mandlik, the famous jurist, as a nominated member finding his protest unavailing, when Lord Ripon under pressure from Whitehall repealed the import duty on Lancashire manufactures, appeared next day in the Council dressed in coarse homespun, and what is more, plainly stated his reason for the same. But such exceptions were rare. They only proved the rule.

Thirty years after the Councils Act of 1861, and after six years of sustained agitation by the Congress for constitutional advance, during which two deputations visited England, Lord Cross's Indian Councils Act of 1892 was passed.[42] Niggardly and half-hearted as this measure of reform was, it was still further whittled down by the rules under the Act. "I will not say," commented Gopal Krishna Gokhale with withering irony, referring to these rules, "that they have been deliberately so framed as to defeat the object of the Act of 1892, but I will say this, that if the officer who drafted them had been asked to sit down with the deliberate purpose of framing a scheme to defeat that object, he could not have done better."[43]

The bureaucracy early manifested the attitude summed up in the word "prestige" which meant that to yield anything, however just and right, to popular demand, was a sign of weakness that needed to be balanced by a demonstration of "firmness" and "strength"; in other words by repression and flouting of public opinion.[44] In the year following the passing of Lord Cross's Council's Act, Lord Lansdowne's Government enacted in half an hour's time and without summoning any representative of India, the amended Coinage Act of 1893, characterised by Lokamanya Tilak as "the crime of June 26, 1893", by which Indian mints were closed to free coinage of silver. The silver of the rupee had depreciated by sixty per cent., while the nominal value of the rupee was artificially enhanced to a corresponding extent. As a result silver that sold at rupee one per *tola* now fetched only As. 10 or As. 11. Ultimately it sank to As. 8. This meant that the Ryot had to part with 60 per cent. more of his produce to meet the Government revenue demands in terms of the inflated rupee. At the same time the value of his jewellery, which constituted his reserve, fell in market value by 60 per cent., bringing untold misery upon millions.

Plague, cholera, earthquake and famine signalised Lord Elgin's rule. As Mahadeva Govinda Ranade put it, it seemed as if "the seven plagues of Egypt" had been let loose simultaneously on the country. To add insult to injury, in the autumn of 1896, when famine was ravaging the province, and people in the language of the subsequent Famine Commission "died like flies", Lord Elgin, during his visit to Jabbalpur congratulated the people on the "prosperity of the Central

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Provinces!" At the United Service Club at Simla in a speech he declared that "India was conquered by the sword and by the sword it shall be held."[45]

Harsh enforcement of the plague measures, which involved invasion of the privacy of people's homes, outraged public feelings so deeply that on the night of the Queen's birthday, the officer-in-charge of those measures, Mr. Rand, was murdered while he was returning in a carriage from Government House at Poona. With him was also killed another officer, Mr. Ayerst. This led to the execution of the Chapekar brothers and deportation without trial of the Sardars Nattu, under Bombay Regulation Act XXV of 1827, a lawless law that had been promulgated for quite a different purpose; and even the conditions of this lawless law were not strictly observed. The Government, acting on the assumption that the murders were the result of a conspiracy, launched a campaign of organised repression, although the Sessions Judge of Poona, an Englishman who tried the Chapekar brothers, declared in his charge to the Jury that he had specially looked into any possible evidence of a conspiracy and found none. A new definition of the word "disaffection", occurring in Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code was given, viz. that it meant "absence of affection", and under it Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the foremost nationalist leader of Maharashtra, and a number of others were tried for sedition and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. The Lokamanya was given rigorous imprisonment for eighteen months but was released six months before the expiry of his sentence as the result of a memorial signed by several European scholars of eminence and distinguished public men in India and England. Among them were Prof. Max Muller, Sir W. W. Hunter, Sir Richard Garth, William Cain, M.P., Dadabhai Naoroji and R. C. Dutt. He completed during his incarceration *The Arctic Home of the Vedas*, a startling piece of original research, in which he elaborated the thesis which he had presented in the germ in his earlier work *The Orion*. It instantly won international recognition. A new Section, 153A, was inserted in the Indian Penal Code to deal with "embitterment of relations between one community and another". The Post Office Act was amended so as to empower postmasters to detain in transit postal articles which they might suspect to contain matter of a "seditious" nature.

Nature conspired with man to fill to overflowing the cup of India's misery, and a famine even more severe than that of 1896-97 afflicted the country in 1899-1900. During Lord Curzon's regime, that began about the close of 1898, a series of repressive and reactionary measures were clamped down in breathless succession for seven long years. Macaulay at the time of the last renewal of the Charter Act of 1833, had made a remarkable statement. In answer to critics who had raised the question whether they could give knowledge to Indians

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without awakening ambition and whether awakened ambition would not require them to provide it with a legitimate vent, he had observed that even at the risk of being called by men of "selfish hearts and contracted minds", by that "most opprobrious of all nicknames", a philosopher, he would say that if as a result of Western education the public mind of India should expand till it had outgrown the system and the people of India should, as a result, in some future age demand European institutions, he for one would never attempt to prevent or restrain it. "Whenever it comes, it will be the proudest day in English history." It was unthinkable, he proceeded, that they would ever consent to administer, after "the practice of the miserable tyrants" whom Bernier found in India, "the *pousta* (opium) of ignorance to stupefy and paralyse a great people" whom God had committed to their charge "for the wretched purpose of rendering them more amenable to our control."

> The sceptre may pass away from us. Unforeseen accidents may derange our most profound schemes of policy. Victory may be inconstant to our arms. But there are triumphs which are followed by no reverses. There is an empire exempt from all natural causes of decay. Those triumphs are the pacific triumphs of reason over barbarism; that empire is the imperishable empire of our arts and our morals, our literature and our laws.[46]

But faced with the political results of the diffusion of University education among Indians, the bureaucracy took fright. The Calcutta University interdicted the writings of Burke. Later the Bombay University stopped the teaching of English History. Lord Curzon appointed the Universities Commission of 1902. It was followed by the passing of the Universities Act in 1904 to bring the Universities under official control. Towards the end of nineteenth century, Indian Universities were almost free from State control. In 1917, they were described by another Commission as being "the most completely governmental in the world". The Commission appointed by Lord Curzon recommended, among other things, that the Vice-Chancellors should be appointed by the Government, which would also approve the appointment of lecturers and professors and would determine the question of affiliation of colleges. It further proposed that minimum rates should be fixed for college fees and a restriction put upon the enrolment of students not by intelligence tests but by making education more expensive.

On top of it came the Act to curtail the power of the Calcutta Corporation and the Official Secrets Act. Lord Curzon outraged Indian sentiment by saying in the course of his speech on the budget proposals of 1904 that Indians were "by their environment, their heritage and their upbringing unequal to the responsibilities of high office under British rule" and the "highest rank of civil employment in India" must, therefore, "as a general rule be held by Englishmen". In his notorious

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address to the Convocation of Calcutta University, he gratuitously insulted the nation by saying that truthfulness was not an oriental virtue and was not accorded a high place in the Indian epics, which praised "successful deception practised by honest men". He called the educated class windbags, frothy patriots lacking in physical courage, and ended by denying that there was such a thing as "an Indian nation". In his speech to the business community, he reiterated that "administration and exploitation must go hand in hand".

A firm believer in bureaucracy, Lord Curzon was convinced that the British Empire was a part of the heavenly design, "*after Providence, the greatest force for good in the world today*"[47], that British rule in India was a permanency and India must for ever remain a "possession" of the British Crown. During the Delhi Durbar of 1903, he rejected the hymn "Onward Christian Soldiers" for church services, it is said, not because it would be out of place at the Proclamation of a Sovereign most of whose soldiers were not Christians, but because it contained the lines "Crowns and Thrones may perish, Kingdoms rise and wane", which struck a note of "unbecoming pessimism."[48] He grossly underestimated the strength of the Congress movement. "My own belief is," he wrote to the Secretary of State, "that Congress is tottering to its fall, and one of my great ambitions, while in India, is to assist it to a peaceful demise."[49] Unconsciously, by consolidating Indian sentiment against the existing order, he helped to strengthen the Congress more than any previous Viceroy. His crowning achievement was the Partition of Bengal which marked the beginning of the end of British rule in India.

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CHAPTER VI

BETWIXT THE OLD WORLD AND THE NEW

1

THE NATIONALIST movement that the Partition of Bengal touched off was a complex of several elements, the true nature and depth of which the British took long to understand and never could wholly appreciate. Several agencies had contributed to its rise. The magnificent resistance of a small nation like the Boers in the South African Boer War, which in the initial stages turned the tables on the British in spite of their overwhelming superiority in men and material; the rout of the Greeks by the Turks in the Turko-Greek war; the example of the Irish Home Rule struggle; the victory of Japan over Russia and its emergence as a world power — all these had fired the imagination of young India and awakened a new spirit in her breast. The transforming leaven introduced by the "Heralds of the New Dawn" and "The Pathfinders" had after nearly a half century of silent action at last begun to bear results. The Indian National Congress had reached the threshold of adulthood.

Separately viewed the various movements ushered in by the "Heralds of the New Dawn" and "The Pathfinders" represented religion without politics. In contrast, the Congress Movement, to begin with, represented politics without religion. But as it matured, several other elements like educational activity on national lines, social reform and industrial revival entered into it and, finally, introduction of the religious ferment brought to it an accession of new vitality and strength.

First among the Congress patriarchs to combine in himself and fuse into a unity all these various trends was Mahadeva Govinda Ranade. A man of lofty patriotism, massive intellect, and saintly character, he was a many-sided genius, who distinguished himself not only as a Judge of the Bombay High Court but also as a historian with a vision of India's destiny; as an economist, who laid the foundation of the Indian School of Economics; and as an ardent social reformer. His greatest gift to India was Gopal Krishna Gokhale, the economist, parliamentarian and statesman, whose budget speeches are to this day studied as classics on the subject, whose advice Morley valued and whom Curzon feared and respected as a worthy foeman. Founder of the Servants of India Society that had for its object training for political work young men who, spurning worldly prospects, would dedicate themselves wholly to the service of the Motherland, Gokhale it was who gave to

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India the *mantra* "politics must be spiritualised". Gandhiji proclaimed him as his "political *guru*".

There is in Maharashtra an extraordinarily gifted community known as Chitpavan Brahmins. Referring to the great influence that this community has wielded in all walks of public life in India, Sir Valentine Chirol, in his *Indian Unrest* wrote: "They sit on the Bench, they dominate the Bar, they teach in the schools, they control the vernacular Press, they have furnished almost all the conspicuous names in the modern literature and drama of Western India as well as in politics."[1] The great Peshwas belonged to this community. To this community also belonged Ranade, Gokhale and Tilak.

Born in 1842 in the Nasik district of Maharashtra, Mahadeva Govinda Ranade had a brilliant academic career. He graduated from the Bombay University and took his degree in 1862 in the first class at its first convocation. His answers to questions in the Master of Arts examination of the Bombay University so impressed Sir Alexander Grant that, it is said, he sent them to the University of Edinburgh to serve as a model for students there.[2] In 1871, one year after its foundation, he joined the Sarvajanik Sabha of Poona. From that time on, for twenty years he continued to rouse the soul of Maharashtra by his able and inspiring contributions to the Sabha's journals. In 1885, he was nominated by Lord Reay, the Governor of Bombay, to the Bombay Legislative Council. Finally, in 1893, when a vacancy arose by the death of Justice Telang, he was appointed Judge of the Bombay High Court.

Between 1881 and 1893, Ranade's activities assumed an all-India character. It was largely under his influence that in 1887, the Indian Social Conference was held in Madras as an adjunct to the Congress. In 1890 he delivered an epoch-making address on Indian Political Economy at Poona in which he attacked the *laissez faire* theory and put forth a vigorous plea for the Government to take the lead in starting new industries and to hand them over to private enterprise, when they were well-established. His great contribution to Indian economic thought was the theory of diversification of occupations by a revival of her indigenous industries as the remedy for India's agricultural decay and the havoc caused by recurring famines.

In 1900 he published his *magnum opus*, *The Rise of Mahratta Power*. In it he showed that the rise of Mahratta power was not merely the achievement of individual adventurers; it was the beginning of the process of nation making, "an upheaval of a whole population strongly bound together by a common language, race, religion and literature, seeking further solidarity through common political independence."

Ranade had a lofty conception of India's destiny. India, according to him, was under the discipline of a higher power. Achieving unity in diversity and developing a rich, composite civilisation, based on mutual toleration, a zest for higher values of life, and love

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of peace and harmony, was the fulfilment towards which she was moving. "The history of this country is but a fairy tale if it has not illustrated how each invasion from abroad has tended to serve as a discipline of the chosen race and led to the gradual development of the nation to a higher ideal, if not of actual acts, at least of potential capabilities."[3] As a result of coming together of Hindus and Muslims under Muslim rule, the Hindus became more single-minded in their devotion and Muslims less bigoted. Teachers arose like Nanak, who said that he was neither Hindu nor Muslim but a worshipper of the Formless One. There were Muslim saints like Sheikh Mahomed Farid and Mahomed Kazi, who were respected by Hindus and Muslims alike. Lord Gouranga had Muslim disciples as well as Hindu. When Aurangzeb by his fanaticism interfered with this process, the Moghul Empire fell and on its ruin arose the Mahratta Confederacy and the Sikhs. But the education of the nation was not yet complete. Both the communities had to cultivate certain virtues which were necessary for a stable and yet progressive civilisation. Both were wanting "in the love of municipal freedom, in the exercise of virtues necessary for civil life, . . . in the love of science and research, in the love of daring and adventurous discovery, the resolution to master difficulties and in chivalrous respect for womankind." So the nation was again passing through a process of schooling under the British to acquire these virtues, which were the predominant characteristic of Western civilisation. When that discipline was over the chosen race would enter the promised land.

> With a liberated manhood, with buoyant hope, with a faith that never shirks duty, with a sense of justice that deals fairly to all, with unclouded intellect and powers fully cultivated, and, lastly, with a love that overleaps all bounds, renovated India will take her proper rank among the nations of the world, and be the master of . . . her own destiny.

Social reform was with Ranade a passion. It brought him into conflict with his great contemporary, Tilak. Junior to him by fourteen years and a savant like him, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the celebrated author of the *Gita Rahasya* was also a daring man of action, a skilled organiser and a born leader of men, deeply respected by his admirers and antagonists alike for his personal purity, renunciation and self-sacrifice. He was essentially a man of the people, who brought the Indian masses into the political field. He had the courage unhesitatingly to give voice to his convictions in spite of all the bureaucratic thunder and was ever ready to suffer for it. He gave to India the first half of the *mantra* of freedom,—"Swaraj is my birth-right and I shall have it", to which Gandhiji later added the other half, viz. "The means thereto are truth and non-violence."

He was born in 1856, and graduated when he was twenty from the Bombay University. Three years later he took his law degree. In 1890 with Agarkar, Chiplunkar, Nama Joshi and Apte, he started a

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private school, and in collaboration with them founded the *Mahratta* in English and the Mahratti *Kesari* at about the same time. Both the journalistic ventures were a tremendous success.

What an uphill and thorny path a social reformer had to tread those days will be seen from a small illustration. In 1880, about fifty men, including Agarkar, Bhandarkar, Ranade and Tilak, attended a missionary meeting, where tea and biscuits were served. For this they were threatened with excommunication by the orthodox Brahmins of Poona. The storm raged for several months and in the end they had both to bow before it and consent to undergo the necessary purificatory ceremonies. The reason why Ranade consented to what to him must have been a sore humiliation, he explained, was that he did not want people to be scared away from social reform under the impression that social reform necessarily involved interdining and intermarriage; his surrender was prompted by his concern for the cause of social reform itself.

In 1884, the Agarkar-Chiplunkar-and-Tilak trio formed the Deccan Educational Society of Poona. But differences arose before long between Agarkar, and Tilak. Agarkar was an agnostic in religion and extremist in social reform; Tilak, a staunch Hindu and an ardent nationalist but in social reform a conservative. Agarkar resigned the editorship of the *Kesari*, and Tilak eventually became the sole proprietor and editor of the *Kesari* and the *Mahratta*. But owing to similar differences, he in his turn had to sever his connection with the Deccan Educational Society. He resigned from the Fergusson College also, where he had been professor of mathematics, and became the leader of the orthodox party in opposition to the Ranade school of social reformers.

The difference between the social reformers and the orthodox party came to a head over the Age of Consent Bill for raising the age of consent to twelve years, when it was introduced in the Imperial Legislative Council in 1891. Tilak as an ardent nationalist was against all interference by a foreign Government in the country's affairs, much more so in social matters. He opposed the measure through the columns of the *Kesari*. Ranade, on the other hand, as an avowed opponent of the *laissez faire* theory, had all along been pleading with Government to take the initiative in promoting economic planning and industrialisation. Consistently with that attitude he saw nothing to object to in the Government promoting legislation for social reform on the people's request and initiative.

Again, as a nationalist, Tilak was not prepared to push social reform at the risk of alienating the sympathy of the orthodox section, and thereby jeopardise the prospect of a united front against foreign rule, which he regarded as the *fons et origo* of all the evils that the country was suffering from. Ranade and his school, on the other hand, felt that political struggle without social reform would limp. Simultaneous progress on all fronts—the economic, the social reform, the religious and

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the political—was essential to success. They were not prepared to subordinate social reform to political struggle. Finally, Tilak held that while persuasion must be the weapon of choice in social reform, in politics compulsion might be necessary. The obstacle in the way of the social reformer was the ignorance of the people. This could be overcome by patient reasoning. The people would then listen to the social reformer and change their ways of life; it was in their interest. But the obstacle that stood in the path of freedom was the self-interest of those in power. They would never yield to verbal persuasion alone. The reformers were confusing the issue and going about their business the wrong way when they tried to use coercion in social reform and persuasion in politics.

Between 1894 and 1895, Tilak instituted the Ganapati Festival and the Shivaji Festival in Maharashtra. The object of the latter particularly was to draw the masses into politics and "to establish the roots of the movement in the spirit of the common man". The Shivaji cult caught the imagination of the people in other parts of the country as well. Lala Lajpat Rai in the Punjab translated in Urdu a popular biography of Shivaji. Surendranath Banerjee popularised the Shivaji cult among the students by lecturing and issuing brochures. In 1902, a Shivaji Festival was held in Bengal, and two years later Rabindranath Tagore composed his celebrated poem "Shivaji Utsav", as a token of Bengal's homage to Shivaji's spirit.

In Bengal, the "Vande Mataram" (Hail Mother) became the war cry of the religion of patriotism. Composed in a moment of ecstasy by that creative genius and celebrated novelist of Bengal, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, "Vande Mataram" was first published in 1882 in his famous historical novel *Ananda Math,* based on the story of the Sannyasi Rebellion against the Muslim rulers of Bengal during Warren Hastings' times. The invocation "Hail Mother" in that novel is put in the mouth of one of the members of the "Brotherhood of the Children of the Mother", who have bound themselves together by mutual vows to dedicate themselves to the deliverance of the Motherland. It is not introduced there as a "religious" song. The Mother invoked is not an ordinary religious deity but the Mother-country, not a mere mass of territory but a living entity working for the fulfilment of her destiny through her sons—all those who are born in it and have sworn allegiance to her as the land of their birth.

Sung for the first time in the Congress by Rabindranath Tagore in 1896, it was only after 1905, when the Anti-Partition Movement ushered in a new era, that "Vande Mataram" became the battle-cry of India's freedom struggle. In the original story the insurrection is against the Muslims, but the setting is only incidental. What is exalted is not antipathy to the Muslim religion but devotion to the Motherland and readiness to sacrifice everything for its sake.

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Nor was "Vande Mataram" intended by the author as a revolutionary song justifying the use of tainted means for a patriotic end. For at the close of the story he pointedly presents the moral that the high purpose of the "Brotherhood of the Children of the Mother" was defeated by the means they had employed. "You have won victories with the proceeds of robbery. A vice never leads to good consequences, and you may never expect to save your country by a sinful procedure." By a curious irony, the "Vande Mataram" song became the "La Marseillaise" of the Bengal revolutionaries; and the invocation "Hail Mother" the war-cry of the terrorist.

2

More or less concurrently with the surge of religious reform and renaissance in Hinduism, there were heavings among the Muslims also. The history of British imperialism in India falls into two distinct phases. The first phase was that of mercantile capitalism which drained India of her wealth and brought about her four-fold ruin. The earliest movement of reform in Islam in India, Wahhabi, corresponds with this phase. Primarily, a movement of protest against decadence of religion and culture in a moribund society that resulted from the impact of mercantile capitalism of the East India Company, it before long increasingly assumed a political and economic character, declared a Jehad against the "infidel"—the Sikhs in the Punjab and the British—and gave rise to furious uprisings by the peasantry against their landlords, irrespective of whether they were Hindu or Muslim. It was put down with the utmost severity by the British in 1858 and again in 1863, but it continued to smoulder. The movement finally collapsed when its ringleaders were brought to trial in 1871.

The second phase of British rule in India coincided with the British industrial capitalism of the nineteenth century when Great Britain was selling manufactured goods, using India as a market and a producer of raw materials for its expanding industry. It gave rise to a new middle class that grew on the fringe of the new exploitation. This class—consisting first of clerks in the bureaucracy and then of small traders and middlemen, who later rose to a considerable status as administrators, merchants and professionals—dependent entirely on British imperialism for its function and importance, felt the need of religious forms and ideologies suited to it, in other words, a liberal, modernised Islam compatible with the nineteenth century West. The adaptation was achieved by repudiating from Islam as a mis-interpretation or a later accretion whatever did not fit in with the Western liberal outlook, while stressing the similarity of the fundamentals of all religions, especially Islam and Christianity.

The most important figure in this movement was Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1896), the founder of the liberal Aligarh School. He was

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born in a well-placed Syed family in Delhi. His education was wholly along orthodox lines. At the age of twenty-one he entered Government service. A man of marked ability and a prolific writer, he published several theological tracts, urging reform of Muslim religion somewhat along Wahhabi lines, and some historical works. The latter were translated into English and French and in recognition of their worth, the Royal Society conferred upon their author its membership.

During the Rising of 1857, he aligned himself with the British and helped save many English lives. The Muslim community, already backward and bitterly repressed by the British Government, had, after the Rising, become sullenly hostile to the British regime. Worried about its future without British favour and its concomitant loyalty, Sir Syed set about to wean it from its policy of antagonism to one of loyalty and cooperation, and the Government from its policy of suppression to one of paternalism; to convince the Muslims that they had been grossly misled to join the anti-British forces and the British that the Muslims as a community were basically loyal, who could easily be won back by a little Governmental tact. In a pamphlet *Asbab-i-Baghawat-i-Hind*—"The Causes of the Mutiny" he tried to show that the Muslim community was basically loyal. He even chided the British Government for not forestalling the Rising by playing the game of divide and rule.

> When Nadir Shah . . . became master of . . . Persia and Afghanistan, he invariably kept the two armies at equal strength. . . . When the Persian army attempted to rise, the Afghan army was at hand to quell the rebellion and *vice versa*. The English did not follow this precedent in India. . . . Government certainly did put the two antagonistic races into the same regiment, but constant intercourse had done its work, and the two races in regiment had become almost one. . . . If separate regiments of Hindus and . . . Mohammedans had been raised, this feeling of brotherhood could not have arisen.[4]

In his *Loyal Muhammedans of India*, he played up the role of those Muslim gentry who had sided with the authorities and was quick to repudiate the "charge" that the Muslims as a community advocated independence. In addition to his pro-British propaganda, he established schools in various places where he was posted, and founded a translation society to prepare books that could take to the Urdu-reading public Western arts and Western sciences so that they might "learn to leave their folly and to appreciate both the power and the benefits of British rule".[5]

After a visit to England in 1870 he was convinced that his life work thereafter must be to persuade his community not only to accept British rule, but to embrace British culture also. Dazzled by English civilisation, he wrote that only now he understood why the English treated the

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"natives" with contempt and how very much the latter deserved it. "The natives of India, high and low . . . educated and illiterate, when contrasted with the English in education, manners and uprightness, are as like them as a dirty animal is to an able and handsome man."[6] He started a paper *Tahzib-al-Ikhlaq*, modelled on the *Spectator* and the *Tatler*, and mooted the idea of founding a Muslim college, where Western culture could be disseminated along with the religion of Islam. In 1875, the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College was opened at Aligarh, "with a flourish under the beaming smiles of a patronizing Government."[7]

His attempt to modernise Islam roused bitter criticism from the conservative vested interests, particularly the Muslim clergy and the class which provided teachers for the teaching of Persian and Arabic. On the other hand, his commentary on the *Koran* in the light of nineteenth century rationalism, in which he laid down the dictum that the scriptures must conform to the laws of nature ("The word of God should be interpreted by the work of God") earned him and his school the derisive epithet *nechari* or "naturalist". He was denounced as a heretic, excommunicated and more than once threatened with death. But the new middle class that was coming to birth, enthusiastically rallied round him and gave to his college its full support.

Closely modelled on Oxford and Cambridge, the Aligarh College was distinguishable from the Christian Missionary Colleges only by the substitution of Islam for Christianity as "the religious extra". Its teaching was to be in English. One of its objects was declared to be "to make the Mussalmans of India worthy and useful subjects of the British Crown".[8] Its founders proclaimed that "the British rule in India is the most wonderful phenomenon the world has ever seen".[9]

A tolerant man personally, Sir Syed in his earlier years was anything but a communalist. The Aligarh College founded by him, unlike Pachaiyappa College at Madras and the Banaras Central Hindu College, kept its doors open to students professing different faiths. The slightest bigotry distressed him. He even deprecated discussion of religious topics between people of different faiths, lest bad blood should result. His views on nationalism and political progress were pretty advanced for his times. In his *Causes of the Mutiny*, attributing the Rising to the ignorance of the Government about the state of the country and their subjects, he had strongly pleaded for the people to be represented in the Legislative Councils: "The voice of the people can alone nip errors in the bud and warn us of the dangers before they burst upon and destroy us. . . .There is no reason . . . why the natives of the country should be excluded from the Legislative Councils."[10] He deplored the aloofness of the rulers from the ruled and emphasised the need of developing a friendliness of feeling between the two. "Government has hitherto kept itself as isolated from the people of India as if it had been the fire and they the dry grass, as if it thought that were the two

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brought in contact, the latter would be burnt up."[11] The people and the Government he likened to a tree, "the latter being the root and the former the growth of that root. As the root is, so will the tree be."[12]

He severely criticised the heavy assessment of land, and castigated the officials for their contempt for the people of India, and the people for their lack of courage to speak out before the British officials. "I may be pardoned if I say that the natives are in the habit of inveighing against such measures in their homes, but when they meet the Europeans, they represent that they were satisfied with the justice and wisdom of the measures."[13] And this at a time when he himself was a Government servant! As a Member of the Imperial Legislative Council, to which he was appointed in 1878, he was the only non-official besides Kristodas Pal to support the Ilbert Bill. He frequently appealed for unity between Hindus and Muslims whom he called the "two eyes" of India. "Do you not inhabit the same land? . . . Remember that the words Hindu and Mahommedan are only meant for religious distinction—otherwise all persons, whether Hindu or Mahommedan, even the Christians who reside in the country, are all in this particular respect belonging to one and the same nation."[14]

In his reply to an address of the Indian Association at Lahore, he observed that granting that the majority of those composing the Association were Hindus, still he would say that

> this light (national consciousness) has been diffused by the same whom I call by the epithet of Bengalees. I assure you that Bengalees are the only people in our country of whom we can properly be proud and it is only due to them that knowledge, liberty and patriotism have progressed in our country. . .
>
> With me it is not so much worth considering what is their religious faith, because we do not see anything of it. What we do see is that we inhabit the same land, are subject to the rule of the same Governors, the fountains of benefits for all are the same, and the pangs of famine also we suffer equally. These are the different grounds upon which, *I call both those races which inhabit India by one word, i.e. Hindu, meaning to say that they are the inhabitants of Hindustan.*[15]

As late as 1884, Sir Syed and his work were highly appreciated by Hindus, Parsees and Christians alike. They not only contributed funds to his college, but also sent some students to join it. His early writings were eagerly read by Hindus and Muslims alike and, during his tour of North India in 1884, he was feted on all sides.

But towards the end of his life, he adopted the role of a communalist political reactionary and began to foster the fear of Hindu domination and work upon it lest the Muslims should make common cause with the nationalists. In 1885, when the Congress was founded he first ignored and then opposed it. In a speech that he delivered in

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Lucknow in 1887, while reiterating his plan of prospering the Muslim professional classes by loyalty and favour, he advised them to keep away from the Congress. "Government will most certainly attend to it (jobs as colonels and majors in the Army) provided you do not give rise to suspicions of disloyalty."[16] To his friend Col. Graham he wrote: "I have undertaken a heavy task against the so-called Indian National Congress and have formed an Association, the 'Indian United Patriotic Association'."[17]

In 1889 he established the Upper India Muhammedan Defence Association to organise the Muslim middle class in opposition to the Congress, although on their merits he recognised the justice of the Congress demands. As a member of the Imperial Legislative Council he favoured communal against joint electorates.

3

What made the patriotic, liberal-minded Sir Syed change so completely and turn into a communalist reactionary and anti-Congress ally of British rule? The explanation is to be found as much in the circumstance in which the Muslims of the upper and middle classes found themselves at different times of their evolution, as in the shifts of the ruling power's policy in regard to the different communities.

The British policy had always been alternately to favour one community at the expense of the other. "As early as 1843, a governor-general had given the warning to London, and suggested the use of communalism to preserve imperialist rule: 'I cannot close my eyes to the belief that that race (Mahommedans) is fundamentally hostile to us and our true policy is to reconciliate the Hindus'."[18] For a considerable time after the Rising of 1857, the British assumption was that the Muslim upper middle classes were primarily responsible for the revolt. To the Muslims were "attributed all the horrors and calamities of that terrible time".[19] Consequently, in the years following the Rising, they were discriminated against, shut out from official employ and from the recognised professions alike, and denied educational facilities.[20]

By 1870, that policy having served its purpose, the British decided to change favourites. British rule was now firmly established. It was, therefore, considered expedient to take into alliance a class that was too weakened for an independent rebellion but was still influential enough to provide an effective counterpoise to the tide of national consciousness that was slowly but steadily rising.

By 1871, Sir W. W. Hunter, in his well-known book on the Indian Mahommedans, was pointing out that the anti-British feeling among all sections of the community was dangerous in its extent and the Government's past policy in respect of the Muslims was, to say the least, unwise.

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He emphasised the need for providing more educational facilities for Muslims in order to win over an influential section of them to loyalty. "The existence side by side of these hostile creeds (Hindu and Muslim)," urged Sir John Strachey, who was in 1876 the Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces, "is one of the strong points in our political position in India. The better classes of Mohammedans are a source to us of strength and not of weakness. They constitute a comparatively small but energetic minority of the population whose political interests are identical with ours." To win the Muslims back to loyalty to the British, thereafter became the recognised official policy.

The Muslims, on the other hand, partly out of the resentment of what they had suffered at the hands of the British, and partly due to the fact that the areas in the north-west of India, where they predominated and had strongly established themselves as the upper class, were the last and least to be affected by Western education, had struck to their old tradition. They had in consequence as a community lagged behind educationally. They were outstripped in the race for economic progress by other groups and their share in the middle-class development had remained weak. The English-educated Hindus forged ahead in the services, in industry, and in commerce. The Muslims became more and more dependent on British favour for their economic rehabilitation. Conditions were ripe for a *rapprochement* between the British Government and the Muslims. The British needed the support of the dissatisfied Muslim "have-not" section to offset the political activity of the more advanced groups as much as the Muslim "have-not" section needed British patronage for advancement in life. Each felt the need of gaining the other's support.

The British officials, therefore, welcomed Sir Syed Ahmed's endeavours towards a reconciliation of the British Government and the Muslim middle and upper classes. They began to encourage the Muslims to enter those classes from which they had been excluded and had excluded themselves, and to offer them positions and privileges in return for loyalty to counter the "nascent Hindu power to revolt".[21] During his visit to England, Sir Syed Ahmed was warmly received by Lords and officials. His essay on the *Causes of the Mutiny*, written fifteen years ago, was resurrected and republished in English by two English officials—Sir Auckland Colvin of the Northern Province and Lieutenant Colonel Graham, who afterwards became Sir Syed's biographer. The Government contributed funds to his college, H. E. Earl Northbrook himself donating Rs. 10,000.

This process was accentuated after the rise of the nationalist movement in the mid eighties in which the Hindu intelligentsia—being the more advanced—were naturally more prominent.

In the port areas of Bombay, Madras and Calcutta—from where infiltration of British commerce and culture into India had taken

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place—the English-educated politically-conscious middle class had naturally developed earlier. This class, feeling itself cramped for lack of adequate opportunities under foreign rule, began more and more to organise itself politically to wrest concessions from the British. Muslims also in these areas, sharing the same opportunities and suffering under the same handicaps as the other groups, developed a political consciousness and began to take an increasingly active and vigorous part in the nationalist movement along with the rest. Badruddin Tyabji, in his Presidential address at the third session of the Indian National Congress, said: "I, for one, am utterly at a loss to understand why Musalmans should not work shoulder to shoulder with their fellow countrymen (*applause*). . . . Gentlemen, this is the principle on which we in the Bombay Presidency have always acted."[22]

This was not a very comforting prospect for the British and Sir Syed. To prevent the politically-conscious Muslim middle class from going over to the Congress, which would have been fatal alike to British plans and Sir Syed's plan of fostering his community under the aegis of the British, Sir Syed took in hand the political organisation of this class, whereas he had previously asked Muslims to keep away from politics altogether. The economically more advanced politically-conscious pro-Congress, and the economically less advanced and politically not-so-conscious pro-British sections were not synonymous with Hindu and Muslim but they could be made to look so, owing to the fortuitous circumstance that in the three port areas, where the politically-conscious middle class had emerged early, the non-Muslim groups preponderated numerically, at least in the upper and middle classes. And since it was this class from which Congress membership was largely drawn, it was not very difficult to depict the Congress as a Hindu body and an instrument for the aggrandisement of the Hindus. The Upper India Muhammedan Defence Association was accordingly formed as a loyalist and anti-Congress organisation in collaboration with the British Government. The same year Sir Syed was knighted by the Crown, being decorated with a K.C.S.I.

Toward the end of his life, Sir Syed lost some of his earlier illusions, and began to see more and more the justice of the Congress demands. After the forced retirement of his son, Justice Mahmud, he wrote:

> The time has not come yet, and perhaps will never come, when our European friends, conquerors of this country, and naturally full of pride of their conquest, will condescend to sit on the same Bench with a conquered and naturally hated Indian, who is desirous of performing his duties with equal honour and respect requisite to his high position. . . . If an Indian desires to obey the dictates of his conscience, and if there is even a little blood of his ancestors in his veins, then he cannot perform his duties. . . . People might

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brag and contend that it was otherwise, but the wise alone know the whole truth of the matter.[23]

But it was too late. The evil seed had been sown and India had to eat the bitter fruit thereof.

4

After Sir Syed's death in 1898, his ideas were expounded and expanded by a group of Muslim intellectuals, whom he had been able to draw to him during his lifetime, and who in turn founded what is known as the Aligarh school. They all more or less shared Sir Syed's liberalism in religion, and were convinced that in acquiring Western education lay the salvation of the Muslim community. Like him they accepted the British occupation as a blessing and a boon. The Anglo-Oriental Muhammedan College at Aligarh became the stronghold of the pro-British politically-conscious Muslim section and a bastion of British bureaucracy for the promotion of communalism among the Muslims, which it used to disrupt the movement of Indian nationalism. Among those who, after Sir Syed's death, continued his latter-day tradition in this respect was Syed Mahdi Ali, entitled Muhsin-ul-Mulk, who became, after Sir Syed, Secretary of the Aligarh College. He took a prominent part in getting together the Aga Khan deputation to the Viceroy, Lord Minto, to ask for separate electorates for the Muslims and in founding the Muslim League.

The story of that "command performance" is well known. When the agitation against the Partition of Bengal was at its height, Lord Morley, the Secretary of State for India, in a letter dated May 11, 1906, to Lord Minto, the then Viceroy, referring to a conversation he had with the Prince of Wales, who had been on a visit to India, wrote: "He talked of the National Congress rapidly becoming a great power. . . . There it is, whether we like it or not."

Lord Minto wrote back: "I have been thinking a good deal lately of a possible counterpoise to Congress aim . . . ."

Five weeks later, on June 19, 1906, the Secretary of State again wrote to the Viceroy: "Everybody warns us that a new spirit is growing and spreading all over India. Lawrence, Chirol, Sydney Low, all sing the same song: 'You cannot go on governing in the same spirit; you have got to deal with the Congress party and Congress principles, whatever you may think of them. Be sure that before long Mohammedans will throw in their lot with the Congressmen against you' and so on and so forth."

What followed is a matter of history. On October 1, 1906, His Highness the Aga Khan led a deputation of Muslims to Lord Minto at Simla to ask that "the Mohammedan community should be represented

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as a community" and that the position of the Mohammedans should be estimated "not merely on their numerical strength but in respect to the political importance . . . of the community and the service it rendered to the Empire."

Lord Minto replied expressing complete agreement: "I can only say that the Mahommedan community may rest assured that their political rights and interests as a community will be safeguarded by any administrative reorganisation with which I am concerned."

Following upon the deputation to the Viceroy, the All India Muslim League was formed in December of the same year. Among the objectives of the League were: "To promote, among the Mussalmans of India, feelings of loyalty to the British Government, to remove any misconception that may arise as to the intention of the Government with regard to any of the measures; to protect and advance the political rights and interests of the Mussalmans of India. . . ." Under the constitution framed for it at Karachi in 1907 and ratified at Lucknow in the forthcoming year, it was to have a permanent president. That position was held by H. H. The Aga Khan till 1914, when a radical alteration was made in its creed which led to his retirement.

In *Lady Minto's Diary* under the date October 3, 1906, referring to the death of Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk, "the great Mohammedan leader", one finds the following mentioned as among his good points: "He it was who *engineered* the recent Mohammedan deputation." In the same Diary, under the date October 1, 1906, which is set down as "a very eventful day, and epoch in Indian history", Lady Minto refers to a letter she received from an official (name undisclosed), which ran: "I must send Your Excellency a line to say that a very big thing happened today, a work of statesmanship that will affect India and Indian history for many a long year. It is nothing less than the pulling back of 62 millions of people from joining the ranks of the seditious opposition."[24]

The communal electorate was accordingly incorporated in the Morley-Minto scheme of Reforms, fixing different standards of franchise for the two communities. To become a voter, a Muslim had to have a taxable income of not less than Rs. 3,000 a year, while the corresponding figure for non-Muslim was three lakhs of rupees. A Muslim graduate had to be of ten years' standing in order to become a voter, while a non-Muslim had to be of thirty years' standing for the same privilege. The Legislatures were further converted into a museum of incompatible elements by introducing into them representatives of a dozen or more separate communities and interests, owning as many separate allegiances, so that they could never work together as a team.

Later, however, it seems that even the philosopher-statesman Secretary of State for India began to have second thoughts on the subject. In a letter to the Viceroy dated January 28, 1909, he warned: "*We have*

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to take care that in picking up the Mussalmans we do not drop our Hindu parcels and this makes it impossible to blurt out full length to which we are or we may be ready to go in the Moslem direction" (Italics mine). But it made no change so far as the main currents of British policy were concerned. The cancer of communal representation was implanted in the body politic of India for good. The protagonists of "divide and rule" could now, to vary the metaphor, very well relax in their chairs and sanctimoniously disclaim all responsibility, while the Frankenstein of communalism that they had raised, took over:

> Now let it work: mischief thou art afoot.
> Take thou what course thou wilt!

5

Put forth officially as an administrative measure to reduce to manageable proportions the unwieldy size of a province which covered the whole of pre-independence Bengal, and the present Assam, Bihar and Orissa, the Partition of Bengal was regarded by the Bengal public as "a deliberate blow aimed at the growing solidarity and self-consciousness of the Bengali-speaking population", a device to diminish its growing political influence, and a sinister move to split India communally in order to counter her nascent nationalism by creating the separate Muslim Province of East Bengal. The official explanation, that it was meant only to remove administrative difficulties, does not hold water. If that were the only object it could have been achieved equally well by keeping together Bengali-speaking population in one province and the rest in the other. The political motive behind the move was obvious.

The final scheme was conceived, discussed and settled in such secrecy that, in the words of Surendranath Banerjee, when on July 20, 1905, the announcement was made that Bengal was to be partitioned, it "fell like a bomb-shell upon an astonished public. . . . We felt that we had been insulted, humiliated and tricked . . . that the whole of our future was at stake."[25] As Lord Curzon's Government had shown systematic disregard of public opinion and had treated public demonstrations with undisguised contempt, it was felt that something more than mere verbal protest was called for. This took the form of the boycott of British goods and Swadeshi.

On August 7, 1905 the leaders of Bengal, assembled in a public meeting at the Calcutta Town Hall under the presidency of Maharaja Manindra Chandra Nandy of Cossimbazar, resolved to declare a "general boycott of British goods as practical protest against the proposed Partition", after the manner of the successful Chinese boycott of American goods. The boycott was originally conceived as a political weapon. It was to last until the partition was withdrawn. But soon it was taken up as a protectionist measure for the revival of Indian

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industries. In its broader aspect, it came to be known as Swadeshi. The conception of Swadeshi was gradually expanded till it became co-terminus with every phase of national life. "We," wrote Surendranath Banerjee in 1906, "must be Swadeshi in all things, Swadeshi in our thoughts and ideas and aspirations—Swadeshi in our educational methods and development."[26]

Swadeshi movement thus came to include moral and social reform, spiritual uplift and industrial, cultural and political revival of the country. Broadening of its basis lifted the anti-Partition movement from a merely political to a higher plane and released the tremendous reserves of idealism and self-sacrifice that fifty years of toil by the seers, sages and prophets of the Indian renaissance had built up. A sum of Rs. 70,000 was collected in one day in the course of a few hours for the revival of Swadeshi industries. Later, an amount of eighteen lakhs was raised to purchase a textile mill to enable Bengal to supply its own need in cloth. It was named "Banga Luxmi Mill" in recognition of the spirit displayed by the women in the furtherance of the cause. The students in one of the colleges in Calcutta, when the movement was at its height, refused to handle exercise books provided for answering questions in their examinations because they were made of foreign-manufactured paper. The examination had in consequence to be postponed, and answer books made of Swadeshi paper had to be substituted. Surendranath Banerjee has related how a five-year-old grand-daughter of his returned a pair of shoes of a foreign make that had been sent to her by a relation, while a girl patient of an eminent physician in Calcutta, not more than six years old, cried out in her delirium that she would not take any foreign medicine.

October 16, 1905, the day on which the Partition of Bengal was effected, was observed in both parts of Bengal as a day of mourning. Millions fasted and abstained from lighting their kitchen fires. Mammoth processions of men, women and children were taken out in all big cities and even in the mofussil. Wearing black sashes on their arms as a sign of mourning, they paraded the streets bare-headed and bare-footed, singing patriotic songs, and rent the sky with shouts of "Vande Mataram". They surged at the river *ghats* and sacred tanks to perform ceremonial baths and tied on one another's wrists the sacred *rakhi*, a piece of silk or cotton thread as a symbol of fraternal and national unity. Leading one such procession was Rabindranath Tagore, who, for a brief while, emerged from his seclusion and became the patriot-poet of the movement. He it was who with his poetic vision conceived the idea of observing Rakhi as a national ceremony signifying solidarity of Bengal. He also had it incorporated in the Bengal calendar.

The authorities were taken aback. The students had become the missionaries of the Swadeshi and boycott movement. To curb their spirit, a circular was issued making it penal for the young student

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population to participate in any way in the nationalist activities. Students who attended public meetings were threatened with various punishments, even to the extent of expulsion from the school, college or University; and the heads of educational institutions were told that unless they kept away their pupils from participating in such activities as boycott, picketing and other "abuses" associated with the Swadeshi movement, the institutions concerned would forfeit their grants and the University would be asked to disaffiliate them. The Circular evoked universal condemnation. "We should really like to know," wrote the *Statesman*, the Anglo-Indian daily of Calcutta, "the name of the imbecile official at whose instance the Lieutenant-Governor sanctioned this order."[27] But the authorities had lost their head completely. Other circulars of a like nature followed. One of them declared the shouting of "Vande Mataram" in the public streets to be illegal.

The restrictions on the students' participation in political meetings led to the boycott of Governmental schools and colleges and starting of educational institutions on national lines, independent of Government control. Twenty-four national schools were opened in East Bengal alone. Under the guidance of Sir Gurudas Banerjee—Judge of the Calcutta High Court and the dissenting member of Lord Curzon's University Commission—the Bengal Council of National Education was established and it was resolved to start a national college and a national university.

This brought Aurobindo Ghosh into the movement. Aurobindo had been educated in England. After taking first class honours in European classics at Cambridge, he sat for the I.C.S. examination and was successful but was disqualified in the test for horsemanship. He was in the service of the Maharaja of Baroda on a salary of £ 500 sterling. In response to the country's call he, without a second thought, gave up his post, and agreed to serve as the Principal of the National College on ten pounds a month. He gathered round him a group of ardent nationalists, and helped to start a number of papers in Bengali and some in English. Of these, the *Sandhya* and the *Vande Mataram* became the organs of Bengal's revolt. In a few months the face of Bengal was changed. A network of volunteers organisations—*sabhas*, *samitis* and *akharas* (gymnasia), *ashrams* and national schools sprang up everywhere.

The ground for these had been well prepared by the activities of the Arya Samaj and the Ramakrishna movement. The Gurukul at Hardwar, completely independent of Government control, had been established early in this century. A number of private educational institutions formed by the Ramakrishna movement were already in existence. Voluntary bodies and associations for the service of the people, even the revival of Swadeshi industries, had become a familiar feature long before the anti-Partition Movement took them up.

From Calcutta the boycott and the Swadeshi movement spread like wild fire all over the province, reaching its climax in East Bengal.

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In Barisal district it became so effective that the Superintendent of Police and the Collector could not obtain even a piece of Manchester shirting for one of their friends as no vendor would sell it without a permit from Aswini Kumar Dutt, the universally respected leader and educationist of Bengal, who became the uncrowned king of the district. In another case, the Collector had to appeal to him to allow a shop-keeper to sell salt to him for his table. Aswini Kumar himself ate his food without salt when he could not get Indian salt.[28]

Sir Bampfylde Fuller, the Lieutenant-Governor of the newly-created province of East Bengal, felt that things had gone too far. To smash the movement, he decided to use force. "Bloodshed might be necessary," he declared, and, after consultation with Lord Curzon, despatched a hundred Gurkhas to Barisal. He followed it up by forcing local leaders to withdraw a circular maintaining the legality of a peaceful boycott of British goods that they had issued. In April, 1906, the Provincial Conference at Barisal which was attended by the most prominent people of two Bengals, was broken up "almost at the point of the bayonet" by the order of the Magistrate and a procession of some 800 or 900 delegates was *lathi*-charged and dispersed by the police, who broke more than one head under the very eyes of the District Superintendent of Police. Sir Bampfylde Fuller propounded his "favourite wife" doctrine. He had two wives, he said, Hindu and Mahommedan, but the Mahommedan was the favourite wife. The Civil Service took the cue from the Lieutenant-Governor. The taint affected even the judiciary. A Sessions Judge declared that he divided the witnesses into two classes, Hindus and Mahommedans, and that he accepted the evidence of one class and rejected that of the other—a remark which drew from the Calcutta High Court a severe stricture on the erring judge.[29]

6

Every mass movement throws up its own leaders. The leadership of the new movement was symbolised by the Bal-Pal-and Lal trio—Bal Gangadhar Tilak in Maharashtra, Bepin Chandra Pal in Bengal and Lala Lajpat Rai in the Punjab. Pal was the theoretician of the new nationalism, Lal the symbol of its masculinity and courage and Bal its heart and soul. An institution by himself was Aurobindo Ghosh. He became the philosopher and high-priest of the movement.

The old Congress leadership was mostly drawn from the lawyer class, with a sprinkling of doctors, engineers and a few members of the landed aristocracy thrown in. Their basic assumption was that Englishmen were by nature just and fair, who would not deviate from truth and justice if properly informed; that the English constitution was the bulwark of popular liberties and the British Parliament the Mother of Parliaments; that the English language was the language of freedom

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and its use and diffusion the means *par excellence* for the attainment of the national goal. One of them, Sir Sankaran Nair, declared that it was impossible to argue a man into slavery in the English language.[30]

The British were not slow to turn to the fullest advantage these traits for strengthening the foundations of their rule. As the extremist ideology gained ground, they showered preferments and favours freely on those who distinguished themselves by their perfervid avowal of loyalty joined to outstanding ability, or made themselves formidable as critics, but in a respectful vein, of the Government. Distinction in the Congress became the high road to preferment in the Government; the individual gained, but the Congress lost, and the national cause suffered a casualty every time that this happened.[31]

The younger generation of the nationalists questioned these basic assumptions. They urged that for twenty long years the Congress elders had hugged their fond illusions to no purpose. Here and there they had won a minor victory or obtained partial redress. But theirs had been, on the whole, a bleak record of rebuff, humiliation and failure. All their skill in debate, all their powers of eloquence and reasoning had availed them nothing. In one case at least even the decision of the British Parliament in their favour had been reduced to a dead letter for lack of an effective sanction. It was time, therefore, that the old leadership and its methods gave way to new, that the Congress were democratised, and the centre of gravity shifted from the Councils and Whitehall to the people.

"Academical knowledge, power of debate, laborious study of problems, the habit of ease and luxury at home and slow and tentative work abroad, the attitude of patience and leisurely self-preparation," wrote Aurobindo in *Bande Mataram*, "are not for this era or for this country". What the salvation of the country demanded was a band of men, "who can give up everything for their country, . . . who will ask for no reward, no ease, no superfluities, but only their bare maintenance."[32] The destiny of India lay with the masses, not with the handful of lawyers and English-educated graduates who had hitherto called themselves the nation. "In the people lives the power of God which is Lord of its future."[33]

It is not that the older set of Congress patriarchs were lacking in patriotism, courage, or love of freedom. It would only betray a poor understanding, or crass ignorance, or both, to attribute supineness or lack of grit to a person, for instance, like Pherozeshah Mehta, who refused to appear at the fetes, levies and receptions accorded to Lord Curzon when that proud pro-consul came for his second term of viceroyalty in 1904. The only function that he attended was a dinner given by one of his Bombay friends and though he was sitting sufficiently near the Viceroy he never looked at him. Embarrassed by his cold eye, Lord Curzon, the story goes, came up to him and said to Mehta: "Why do you persecute

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me? What have I done that you should turn your back upon me in this fashion? What is it?"

"We were old 'chums' at Oxford," Mehta answered, "when you came over as Viceroy I did every honour towards you . . . to show that I was a friend. You became arrogant. . . . You refused to recognise that I was a Member of the Imperial Council. . . . You wrote through your Private Secretary. You did not care for me. I want to show that I have teeth also."[34] Lord Curzon left Mehta with a murmured apology.

But it was the same Pherozeshah Mehta, who, more loyal than the King, publicly opposed, on legal and constitutional grounds, the right of the official members of the Viceroy's Council to vote independently and according to their conscience, as they had done, when Lord Lytton had sacrificed the excise duties on Lancashire goods under pressure from Whitehall.[35] The limitations of Pherozeshah Mehta and his school arose from the philosophy of life that they had derived from their Western education. The bonds it forged were subtler and stronger than any that outside authority could impose. The latter they could and did defy when the occasion demanded but they were unresisting, because unconscious, prisoners of the former. Contrary to Sir Sankaran Nair's dictum that it was impossible for anyone to be argued into slavery in the English tongue, it was their English education alone that riveted the mental fetters which these Congress elders could not break. They belonged to a bygone era and carried with them the limitations of that era. They had outlived their historical role, and in the new era that had overtaken them, they had become an anachronism.

There was a short period in the history of the British rule in India that evoked a respect and loyalty among the Indian people which it is difficult to envisage at this distance of time. This was the period between 1833, when the East India Company's trade was abolished, and the accession of Queen Victoria to the throne in 1837. The annexationist wars of Hastings and Wellesely were over. After a long period of misrule, oppression and extortion under the East India Company's rule, India was beginning to settle down. Some of the worst blunders of civil administration had been rectified. The burden of land revenue had been lightened, and Indians had begun to be welcomed to a share in the administration. Education on Western lines, which some of the earlier reformers of India had been praying for, had been introduced and its ill effects had not yet begun to be felt. The young Queen had begun her reign by a noble Proclamation which had filled the people with fresh hope. Enlightened and sympathetic administrators like Munro, Elphinstone and Bentinck, had set the example of putting what they considered to be their duty towards the people of India above all other considerations. About Elphinstone, the Governor of Bombay, it is related that one day Lt. Col. Briggs, who had served under him at the time of the Mahratta crisis, observing in a corner of his tent a

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pile of printed Maharatti books, asked him what they were meant for. "To educate the natives," Elphinstone answered. "But it is our highway back to Europe" he added. Col. Briggs thereupon asked him how as Governor of Bombay he had set that on foot. To which Elphinstone replied, "We are bound under all circumstances to do our duty to them."

Those who had lived through these times carried with them like "trailing clouds of glory" the memories of that fine mood. "In my younger days," writes R. C. Dutt, "I was brought up among those who had been in school and college in 1837, when the Queen ascended the throne; and I do not exaggerate facts when I state that nothing could exceed the appreciation of English literature, thought and character, nothing could exceed the loyalty to the British rule which these men felt and expressed in their everyday conversation. They had recollections of the times of Bentinck, Elphinstone and Munro; they had seen Macaulay, Trevelyan and Metcalfe; and a faith in English truth was a part of their beliefs."[36]

It was different with the succeeding generations—those who were educated in the 'nineties. The memories they carried with them, and which formed their mood, were those of the Ilbert Bill agitation, Lord Lytton's reactionary regime and Lord Curzon's despotic rule, culminating in the Partition of Bengal.

The first generation of the Congress patriarchs had accepted British rule in India as a sort of a divine dispensation—Pherozeshah Mehta's "inscrutable dispensations of Providence", which had brought India and England together.[37] Ranade had elaborated that faith into his philosophy of history. British rule to these Congress leaders was a condition of peace, stability and progress. Whatever administrative changes, redress of grievances or political reforms they fought for were within the framework of British rule. Faith in the moral foundation of the British administration in India was implicit in their thinking. At the Ahmedabad Congress, in 1902 Surendranath Banerjee declared from the Presidential chair: "We plead for the permanence of British rule in India." Even Bepin Chandra Pal, reflecting the spirit of the times, observed in the speech delivered on the occasion of the Shivaji festival as late as 1901 that the realisation of their highest destiny was not necessarily inconsistent with the highest ideals of the Empire. "Though so far in many respects kept out of our legitimate heritage, we too, Sir, are children of the British Empire and are, therefore, loyal to its highest and purest interests. And we are loyal, because we believe in the workings of the Divine Providence in our national history."[38]

The Swadeshi movement, in the course of a few years, changed all that. The deep-seated faith in the paramountcy of the British rule in India as a part of the Divine dispensation was completely shattered and its place was taken by the new political slogan: "Freedom is the life-breath of a nation; to attempt social reform, educational reform, indus-

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trial expansion, or the moral improvement of the race without aiming first and foremost at the political freedom is the very height of ignorance and futility."[39] Reviewing the political situation in India in 1907, Lord Minto observed: "The Government of India would be blind indeed to shut its eyes to the awakening wave which is sweeping over the Eastern world, overwhelming old traditions and bearing on its crest a flood of new ideas."[40]

Corresponding to the change in the objective, there was a change in the method too. In place of the old "mendicant" method of "petitioning, prayer and protest" that the Congress had hitherto followed, the new party advocated "passive resistance". "The first principle of passive resistance," wrote *Bande Mataram*, the organ of the new school, "is to make the administration under present condition impossible by an organised refusal to do anything which shall help either British commerce in the exploitation of the country or British officialdom in the administration of it. . . . This attitude is summed up in one word, 'Boycott' ".[41] Boycott, from being purely an economic weapon, thus came to mean the "four-fold refusal of cooperation with the Government—the economic boycott, the educational boycott, the judicial boycott, as well as the boycott of the executive administration."

The "passive resistance" movement was to be kept "within the bounds of law", unless and until this was found utterly impossible. If they were not allowed to function within the four corners of the law for the attainment of their goal of political freedom, they must then be prepared to break the law and "endure the penalty imposed for the breach with the object of making it unworkable as has been done in other countries."[42] Explaining the rationale of it, *Bande Mataram* wrote: "We must always remember . . . that alien absolutism in this country depends helplessly on the cooperation of our own people. Let that cooperation be withdrawn and bureaucratic absolutism tumbles in like a house of cards."[43]

The new party called the old party "moderates" and were themselves known as "extremists". Often they were disrespectful and rude to the elder Congress patriarchs and did much to make rowdyism fashionable in political warfare.

While the extremists were advocating "passive resistance", the impatient section among them began to think in terms of the bomb and the revolver. Within the extremist fold thus there began to form a party of terrorism and violence. The revolutionary bi-weekly *Jugantar* became the mouth-piece of this school. The British Government in India was based on force and fraud, the terrorists argued. There should therefore be no scruples about the use of force as well as fraud against the Government,[44] or about the removal as "enemy" of any one who helped it, or stood in their way. They were at war. To provide themselves with the sinews of war, they would, therefore, be justified in looting Government treasuries, levying taxes on the people

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and taking by force the wealth or property of those "who would not give it willingly".[45]

The differences between these two sections, on the one hand, and the "moderates" on the other, came to a head in 1905, when the twenty-first annual session of the Congress was held at Banaras under the presidentship of Gopal Krishna Gokhale. But a crisis was averted by a compromise resolution which, while endorsing by implication the boycott movement launched by Bengal, adroitly left unsaid whether the Congress approved it.[46] In the Congress camp, the younger Congressmen met in an open conference to discuss their future programme. It was on this occasion that Tilak put before them the idea of passive resistance.

Next year, the differences became even more acute. But the situation was again saved by prevailing upon Dadabhai Naoroji, who commanded the respect of both the sections, to come over from England and preside at the Congress that was to meet at Calcutta in December, 1906. The Grand Old Man of India, then eighty-one, rose to the occasion and in his closing address proclaimed, for the first time from the Congress platform, that their goal was "self-government, or Swaraj, like that of the United Kingdom or the Colonies." The attainment of this goal was, with a modification, officially adopted by the Congress as its creed.[47] Under Dadabhai's lead it passed a resolution unequivocally in favour of boycott, Swadeshi, National Education and Swaraj. Swaraj thus came to be added to the three-fold programme of the Congress. The annulment of Partition was left behind in the course of the struggle, and the larger issue of freedom took its place.

The year 1907 was marked by a feverish implementation of the three-fold programme of boycott, Swadeshi and national education. In the meantime, Sir Bampfylde Fuller having resigned, his policy of preference for the Muslims was continued by his successor. Hooliganism by Muslims was encouraged and a regime of lawlessness and terrorism was let loose over the whole of East Bengal and all over India. "At one place," records that veteran journalist and Liberal leader, C. Y. Chintamani, " 'some Muslims proclaimed by beat of drum that the Government had permitted them to loot the Hindus', while at another, they publicly declared—according to a Magistrate—'that the Government had permitted the Mohammedans to marry Hindu widows in the *nika* form'. One savage outbreak followed the wide circulation, among the Muhammedans in East Bengal, of a 'red pamphlet', the contents of which are so abominable that I think I had better not say more about it."[48]

In the north, Punjab became the storm centre. Agitation against an unpopular Government measure, known as the Colonisation Bill, which affected the rights of the settlers who provided recruits to the Army, led to the deportation without trial of Lala Lajpat Rai and Sardar Ajit Singh, under Bengal Regulation III of 1818, on the ridiculous charge that Lajpat Rai was trying to tamper with the loyalty of the

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soldiers. There was a wholesale prosecution of respectable people at Rawalpindi and the Seditious Meetings Act was promulgated.

The whole country was in a state of ferment. Driven to desperation by the orgy of repression, a section of the Nationalists declared that "force must be met by force", and began to advocate launching of guerilla warfare against the established despotism. Barindra Kumar Ghosh, Aurobindo's brother and Bhupendra Nath Dutta, a brother of Swami Vivekananda, became the disseminators of this cult. An attempt was made in 1908 to blow up the train of Sir Andrew Fraser, Governor of Bengal and one of the authors of the Partition plan. A political conference at Midnapore presided over by Surendranath Banerjee was sought to be wrecked by some people who were suspected to be associated with the terrorists.

When the Congress met at Surat in December, 1907, the difference between the two groups had become unbridgeable. The Extremists feared that the Moderates would not allow the resolution on Boycott, Swadeshi and National Education to be brought up at the Congress session. The Moderates, on the other hand, were afraid that the Extremists would try to force the programme of boycott upon other provinces besides Bengal, and "swamp" the Congress with delegates pledged to support their line of action. Each section distrusted the *bona fides* of the other. Trouble arose when Tilak's request to be allowed to address the delegates on the opening day of the Congress session was ignored by the Chairman. Both sides had come prepared for a show-down by the use of force, if necessary, that being the only way known at that time to resist an injustice after reason and verbal persuasion had failed. And that was the pity of it. A pointed Mahratta shoe—reddish leather, sole studded with lead—hurtled through the air, struck Surendranath Banerjee on the cheek and cannoned off upon Sir Pherozeshah Mehta. Pandemonium followed and the Congress broke up in confusion and disorder.

From his retreat in Pondicherry Aurobindo afterwards wrote:

> Very few people know that it was I (without consulting Tilak) who gave the order that led to the breaking of the Congress and was responsible for the refusal to join the new-fangled Moderate Convention which were the two decisive happenings at Surat.[49]

7

The split at Surat irrevocably divided the two parties of Nationalists and confirmed the younger party in their programme of passive resistance and force. Taking advantage of the division within the Congress ranks, the Government struck. New repressive measures were promulgated—the Press Act (1908), the Seditious Meetings Act (1908), the Explosive Substances Act (1908) and two years later, the Criminal Law

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Amendment Act, which cut at the very root of popular liberties. Press prosecutions became the order of the day. The *Yugantar*, the *Sandhya* and the *Vande Mataram* were suppressed. Five years for "sedition" became a common affair. Within a few months almost all the leaders were put behind prison-bars. On July 15, 1908, B. G. Tilak was arrested for preaching sedition and sentenced after a five-day trial to six years' rigorous imprisonment. Being asked by the judge before pronouncing the sentence if he had anything to say he made this historic statement:

> There are higher powers that rule the destiny of men and nations and it may be the will of Providence that the cause I represent may prosper more by my suffering than by my remaining free.

Transported to Mandalay, he utilised his incarceration to write his mounmental commentary on the *Gita*, "*The Gita Rahasya*".

Aurobindo Ghosh was prosecuted for conspiracy to wage war against the King but was acquitted for want of evidence. After suffering three prosecutions and undergoing many hardships, he finally left British territory and settled down in the French enclave of Pondicherry. B. C. Pal was sentenced to six months' imprisonment; Chindambaran Pillai, a Madras leader, to six years; a Muslim leader from U. P., Hasrat Mohani, to one year. In December, 1908, nine of the Bengal leaders were seized and deported without trial and without a charge.

Sedition by these means was driven underground. A terrorist interlude followed. A network of secret organisations of patriotic youngmen bound together by solemn vows and pledged to lay down their lives for the deliverance of the country, sprang up all over Bengal and in several other parts of the country. The first bomb outrage took place at Muzaffarpur on April 30, 1908, when a bomb meant for Mr. Kingsford, who had been Chief Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta and had sent to jail many persons accused of political offences, resulted in the murder, by a mistake of identity, of Mrs. and Miss Kennedy, the wife and daughter of Mr. Pringle Kennedy. Of the two persons involved in the outrage, one (Khudiram Bose) was hanged, the other shot himself when about to be captured. The irony of it was that Mr. Pringle Kennedy, a graduate of an Indian university, was one of the few Englishmen who had identified themselves with the Congress cause. Several officials lost their lives at the hands of the terrorists. At least three attempts were made on the life of Sir Andrews Fraser, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal and one of the authors of the Partition plan, including one to blow up his train. At Ahmedabad, an attempt was made on the life of Lord Minto, the Viceroy. Sir Wyllie Curzon, the Political Secretary of Lord Morley, Secretary of State for India, was assassinated in London by Madanlal Dhingra, a Punjabi youth from Amritsar. The assailant was hanged. A collector was murdered at Nasik. Before the end of the chapter, in eleven

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years between 1906 and 1916, eighty-two persons in Bengal had lost their lives and one hundred and twenty-one were wounded.

The terrorist activity with its concomitant, secrecy, proved to be a two-edged weapon. The Government knew how to meet this kind of challenge. It resorted to espionage and employment of agents-provocateur to counter the secret methods of the terrorists. At the 1908 session of the Congress, held in Madras, the Congress *pandal* was honeycombed with one hundred spies dressed in plain clothes, besides twenty accredited ones. Everybody who was anybody in public life was shadowed, his mail was censored and his correspondence was liable to be intercepted. Nobody dared speak or breathe freely. The atmosphere was choked with suspicion and distrust. People were afraid of their own shadow. Nobody knew who was who; every stranger was looked upon as a Government spy. Lala Lajpat Rai was so harassed by the members of the Secret Intelligence Department that he was forced to leave the country and took asylum temporarily in the U.S.A.

Even worse was the demoralisation in the ranks of the terrorists. There were factions, dissensions and intrigues inseparable from underground activity. Unseemly quarrels, mutual suspicion and jealousies led sometimes to employment of violence among themselves, and more than one terrorist met his end at the hands of his own comrades. A stifling atmosphere pervaded the country. Public men boasted of their skill in "safe slander". Secrecy, camouflage, equivocation and subterfuge became the stock-in-trade of the patriot.

In 1909, the India Councils Act embodying the Morley-Minto Reforms was passed. By that time hope deferred had already made the Indian heart sick, and the reforms, in the words of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, had lost "half their value and all their grace". The Act itself fell short of the expectations that Lord Morley's despatch a year earlier had raised, and in the course of framing the rules thereunder it was still further pared down. "Nobody in India was under an illusion," observes Surendranath Banerjee in his autobiography, "that they (the Morley-Minto Reforms) meant very much. All they gave was the right to non-official members to move resolutions on public questions, thus affording them opportunities of criticising the measures and policies of the Government without exercising any real control over them."

Even so, lest there should be any false impression as to the intent or ultimate purpose of the Reforms that he was introducing, John Morley the Secretary of State for India made it clear that for so long as he could see, he did not think that India would be fit for parliamentary institutions. "If I were attempting," he said in the House of Lords, "to set up a parliamentary system in India, or if it could be said that this chapter of reforms led directly or necessarily up to the establishment of a parliamentary system in India, I, for one, would have nothing at all to do with it."[50]

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Very significantly, the first measure of the new Councils, created as a result of the Morley-Minto Reforms, was the passing of the Press Act of 1910, which was so repressive that the newly appointed Law Member S. P. Sinha threatened to resign rather than be party to it. It had in consequence to be toned down. Even so, it was so thoroughly bad that it made the position of the new Law Member in the country unenviable.

Through all these years, the Partition of Bengal had continued to be a festering sore. It was clear that there could be no peace in the country until it was annulled. "If my country was divided in the way your province has been," Lord Minto candidly remarked to Surendranath Banerjee in an interview, "I should feel just as you do."[51] But the bureaucratic prestige was at stake; the Partition was a "settled fact", and could not be "unsettled". A way had to be found out of it. So when Lord Minto was succeeded by Lord Hardinge as Viceroy, Lord Crew had succeeded Viscount Middleton as Secretary of State, and Sir Ali Imam had taken the place of Lord Sinha in the Viceroy's Executive Council, advantage was taken of the Coronation celebrations of King George V to "annul" the Partition, which was disowned by Lord Curzon who had conceived it, by Lord Ampthill who had signed it, as the acting Viceroy, and by Lord Morley and Lord Middleton, the two Secretaries of State concerned!

The reunification of the two Bengals restarted the flow of effusive professions of loyalty to the Crown in the Congress. At the twenty-sixth session at Calcutta in 1911, referring to the "annulment" a Congress leader delivered himself as follows: "Every heart is beating in unison with reverence and devotion to the British Throne, overflowing with revived confidence in and gratitude towards British statesmanship."[52]

But the political horizon of India remained dark in spite of the "annulment", leaving little room for rejoicing. Bihar was separated from Bengal, and constituted into a separate province; the capital of India was shifted from Calcutta to New Delhi, dealing a severe blow to the prestige of the City of Palaces, and to the political influence of the Bengali community in the Government of India; the country was being administered like a police State; popular liberties were stifled; a ruthless man-hunt of the terrorists was in full swing; torture and "third degree" with a view to extorting confessions were the lot of such of them as were captured; and some of the finest talent in the country was wasting away in prison. The boycott and Swadeshi movements, after their initial success, had lost much of their momentum and gradually subsided, leaving an unsavoury after-taste in the mouth. While popular enthusiasm lasted, the Bombay and Ahmedabad mill-owners had a highly prosperous time of it. They cooperated so long as profits went hand in hand with patriotism, but, when it came to choosing between the two, true to

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their type they quietly grabbed the one and jettisoned the other as an unpropitious Jonah. The people had, in their enthusiasm, poured their hard savings to promote national enterprises, but, in the words of Surendranath Banerjee, "In the wild enthusiasm of the hour and the eager desire to help forward our domestic industries, the preliminaries of organisation were not always carefully thought out, and the need of expert knowledge was not sufficiently attended to. Capital flowed in, but capital was not always wisely employed. Failures followed, and they served to damp the Swadeshi spirit."[53]

* * *

And so, a half century after the Great Rising and after twenty-five years of constitutional struggle, India found herself nowhere within a measurable distance of regaining her lost independence. Constitutional agitation had come to the end of its tether, but no effective substitute had been found for it. The terrorist interlude had left the Congress divided, and the masses demoralised. The more daring ones of the country's leaders were either in prison or in exile. Rabindranath had early discerned the weaknesses and flaws in the nationalist movement, which he has so penetratingly analysed and depicted in his famous novel *The Home and the World.* Disgusted and disillusioned with "the barren agitational politics", and "the politics of the slothful armchair variety" alike, he said: "In our national life also, because we are wanting in the determination and discipline requisite for rendering true service to the motherland, we are impelled to drown the pangs of our unsatisfied conscience in the intoxication of political outcry and agitation." He retired to his ivory tower once again to lose himself in his experiments in constructive nation-building. Aurobindo had become the recluse of Pondicherry; Tilak was serving out his sentence of six years' rigorous imprisonment in Mandalay Fort, broken physically but with spirit undaunted; Lala Lajpat Rai was sojourning in far-off United States, the fire within B. C. Pal had died out. The nationalist movement had come to a dead end.

Great and daring new ideas loomed on the Indian horizon like "cloudy symbols of some high romance"—the same that later made history—"Passive Resistance", "Four-fold Boycott", "Non-Cooperation". Tilak had even foreshadowed non-payment of taxes. But the prime mover and the motive power—the man who could harness those ideas and the force that could set them into motion had yet to come. An unbridged gulf yawned between the concept and its realisation. The country lay in chains prostrate under the iron heel of foreign rule. Aurobindo Ghosh had, in his famous Uttarpara speech in 1908, described in vivid terms his sense of desolation, on his return to freedom after over a year's incarceration in Alipore gaol.

"I looked round when I came out, . . . I looked round for those to

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whom I had been accustomed to look for counsel and inspiration. I did not find them. There was more than that. When I went to jail, the whole country was alive with the cry of Bande Mataram, alive with the hope of a nation, the hope of millions of men who had newly risen out of degradation. When I came out of jail I listened for that cry, but there was instead a silence. A hush had fallen on the country and men seemed bewildered; for instead of God's bright heaven full of the vision of the future that had been before us, there seemed to be overhead a leaden sky from which human thunders and lightnings rained. No man seemed to know which way to move, and from all sides came the question, 'What shall we do next? What is there that we can do?' "[54]

Despair of the present found expression in apocalyptic visions of the future. Aurobindo even envisioned the would-be deliverer who would lead the wandering tribes into the Promised Land: "The hero, the martyr, the man of iron will and iron heart, the grim fighter whose tough nerves defeat cannot tire out nor danger relax, the born leader in action, the man who cannot sleep or rest while his country is enslaved . . .who can tear his heart out of his body and offer it as a bleeding sacrifice on the Mother's altar, the heart of fire and the tongue of flame whose lightest word is an inspiration to self-sacrifice or a spur to action, for these the time is coming. . . ."[55]

That picture by and large was unchanged when the rumblings of the first World War began to be heard. Every measure of reform, every concession wrung from the bureaucracy had been more than counter-balanced by repression and calculated insult to public opinion, as if to leave no manner of doubt in anybody's mind that British power had lost none of its fibre and was as determined as ever to wield the whip. No effective answer had been found to the challenge of brute force.

It was, however, the darkness before the dawn. The answer to that challenge had already been forged by one of her sons in a distant land, who brought together in a grand synthesis in his philosophy of soul force all the various strands of India's tradition, all the powers of thought and action, and political experience and organisation that India had evolved in the course of her history. He was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the author and hero of the South African Satyagraha struggle.

A lineal descendent of six generations of untutored geniuses, such as gave India some of her most illustrious administrators and rulers before she became an appendage of foreign rule, and heir to India's ancient spiritual tradition that was exemplified in the Heralds of the New Dawn and the Pathfinders, he was educated in England and matured in South Africa. India was

> Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
> The other powerless to be born,

when at the end of the World War One, he returned to the land of his

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birth to lead his people to deliverance. He hailed from Kathiawar or Saurashtra—that ancient land of romance linked on the one side, by the waters of the Indian ocean, to the Continent of Africa and to the mainland of India on the other—the two fields where his life's mission lay.

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[ONE

Dadabhai Naoroji. "I am . . . inexperienced and young . . . guide me . . . I am as children to the father". —Gandhiji. (page 5)

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"a living embodiment of Godliness". (page 80)

Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.



[TWO

Sarada Devi: "symbol of immaculate humanity–Saradamoni the Ma became the antetype of Kasturba (Mother)". (p. 86)

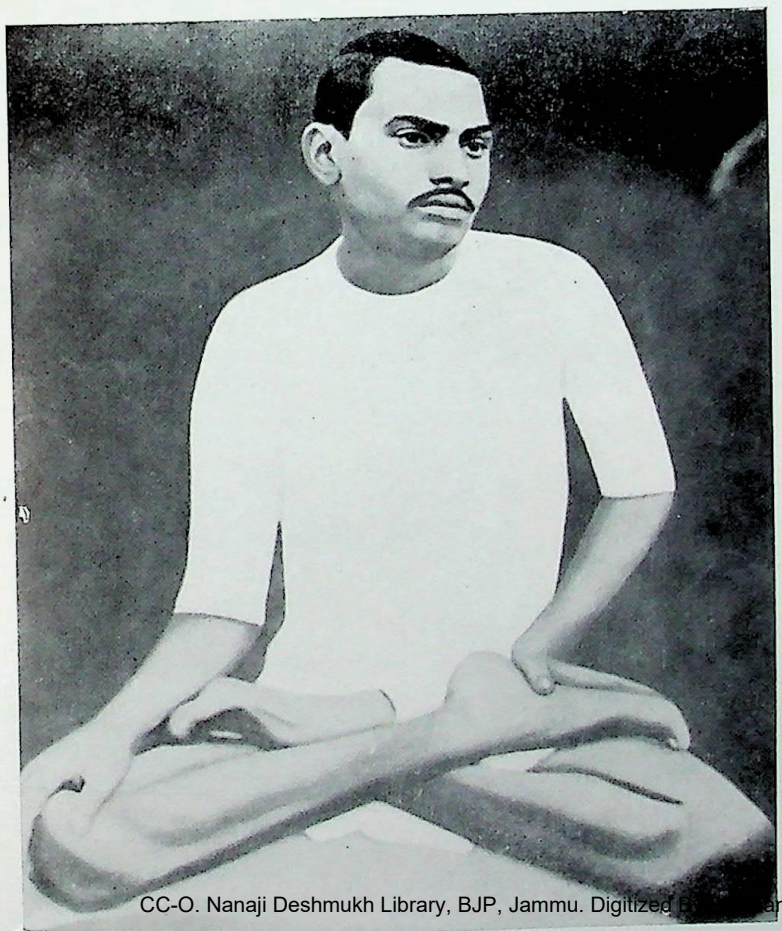
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Raja Ram Mohun Roy: (1772-1833)



Swami Vivekananda: (1863-1902)



[THREE

Shri Rajchandra (-1901): "In spiritual perception he (Gandhiji) placed him even before the Russian Sage (Tolstoy) (page 273)

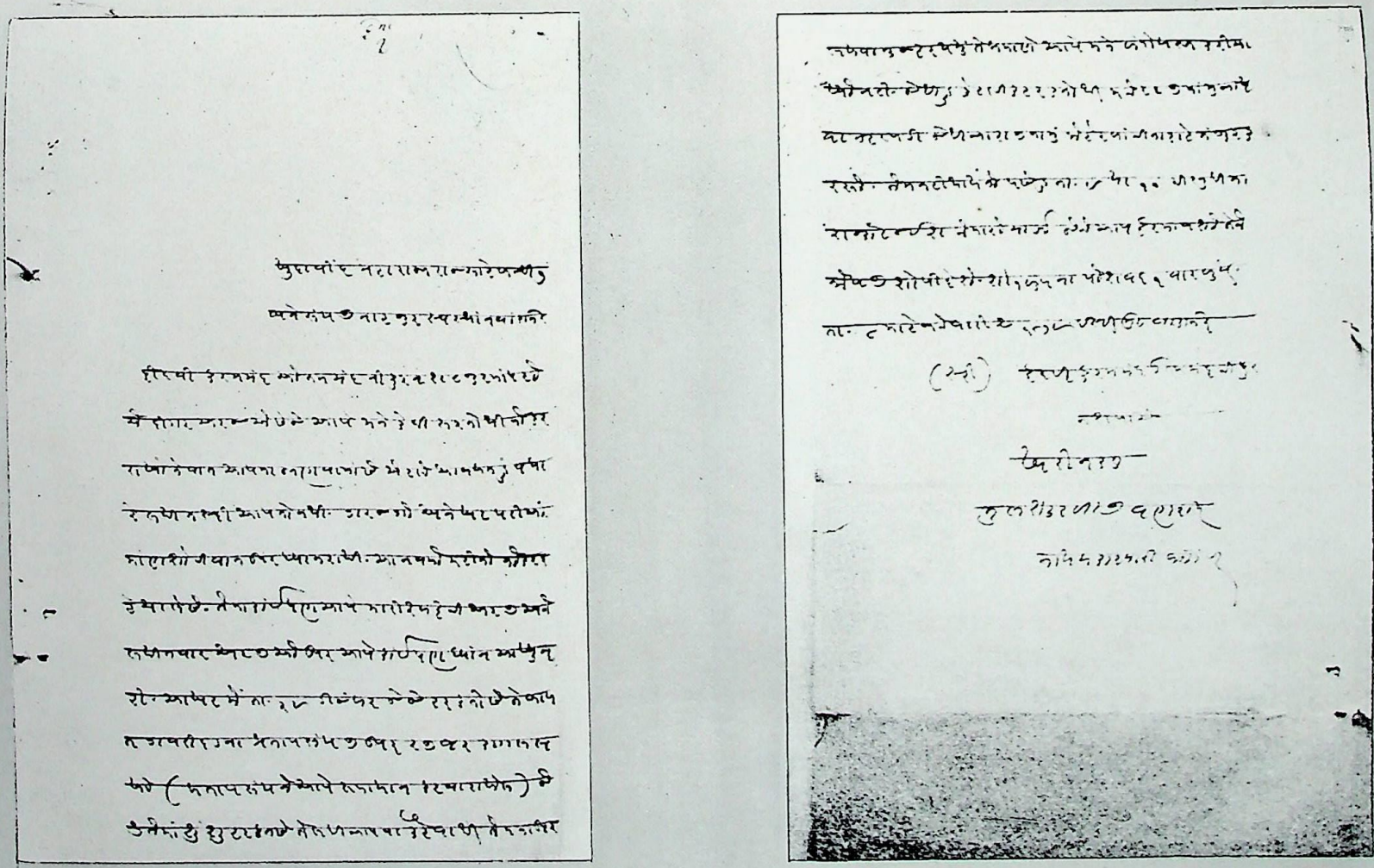
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FOUR] Kaba Gandhi.

Autograph by Gandhiji in Gujarati: "Respects at his feet of his son Mohandas".

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FIVE] The letter of resignation of Kaba Gandhi from Dewanship of Wankaner State dated Jan. 8, 1879. "Compelled by the difficulties of my position . . . (I) submit my resignation with the request that it may be accepted, failing which I shall leave for Rajkot . . . . "

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(Above) Gandhiji's house at Rajkot. "Above the main gate . . . a small room" (page 194). (Right) The house at Porbander. "Living in murky . . . surroundings they developed a physique and character as sturdy and solid as the house they lived in." (page 191)

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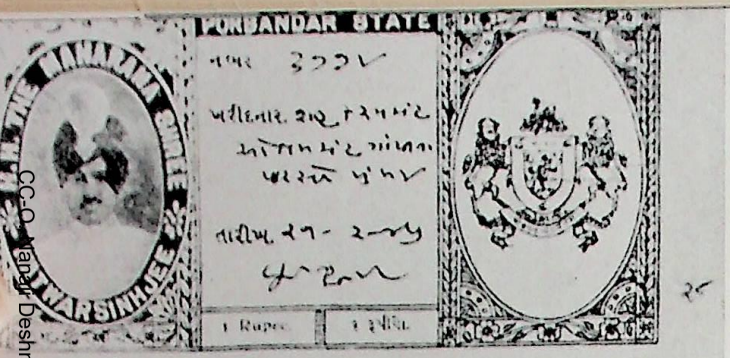


Gandhiji at seven "Cheerful sweet face . . . radiant forehead . . . lovely eyes". (page 194)



The exact spot where Gandhiji was born. Indicated by the Swastika mark "Even the lying in bed . . . was used jointly by all". (page 19).

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(Left)

Special Power of Attorney for acquiring ancestral home of the Gandhis dated Poona, Feb. 27, 1945. Gandhiji's signature on right; author's attestation as witness on left below the date line.

(Right)

Deed of sale and transfer for ancestral home of Gandhis in Porbander (1777) with signature of seven witnesses besides the seal and the Swastik mark of the Rana — in lieu of signature. (page 190)

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REGISTER No. 89 of 18

Kattywar Political Agency Gazette.

કાઠીયાવાડ પોલીટીકલ એજન્સી ગેઝેટ.

Published by Authority.

THURSDAY, 4TH SEPTEMBER 1873.

ગુરૂવાર તારીખ ૪થી સપ્ટેમ્બર સને ૧૮૭૩.

EXTRAORDINARY.

The following Notification of the Establishment of the Rajasthanik Court is republished for general information :—

J. B. PEILE,
Acting Political Agent.

Kattywar Political Agency,
Rajkote, 1st September 1873.

POLITICAL DEPARTMENT.

The Honourable the Governor in Council is pleased to publish the following for general information :—

The Rajasthanik Court of Kattywar is established with the sanction of the Government of India and Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for India for the hearing of claims about Giras made by Bhayads or Meolgrassias against their Talukdars.

The Rules for the establishment and regulation of the Court, which have been approved by the Government of India and Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State, are republished below.

According to the Rules of the Court Lieutenant-Colonel S. C. Law has been appointed by Government to be President of the Court, and the following six members of the Court have been selected by Government from a list of twelve proposed by the Durbars :—

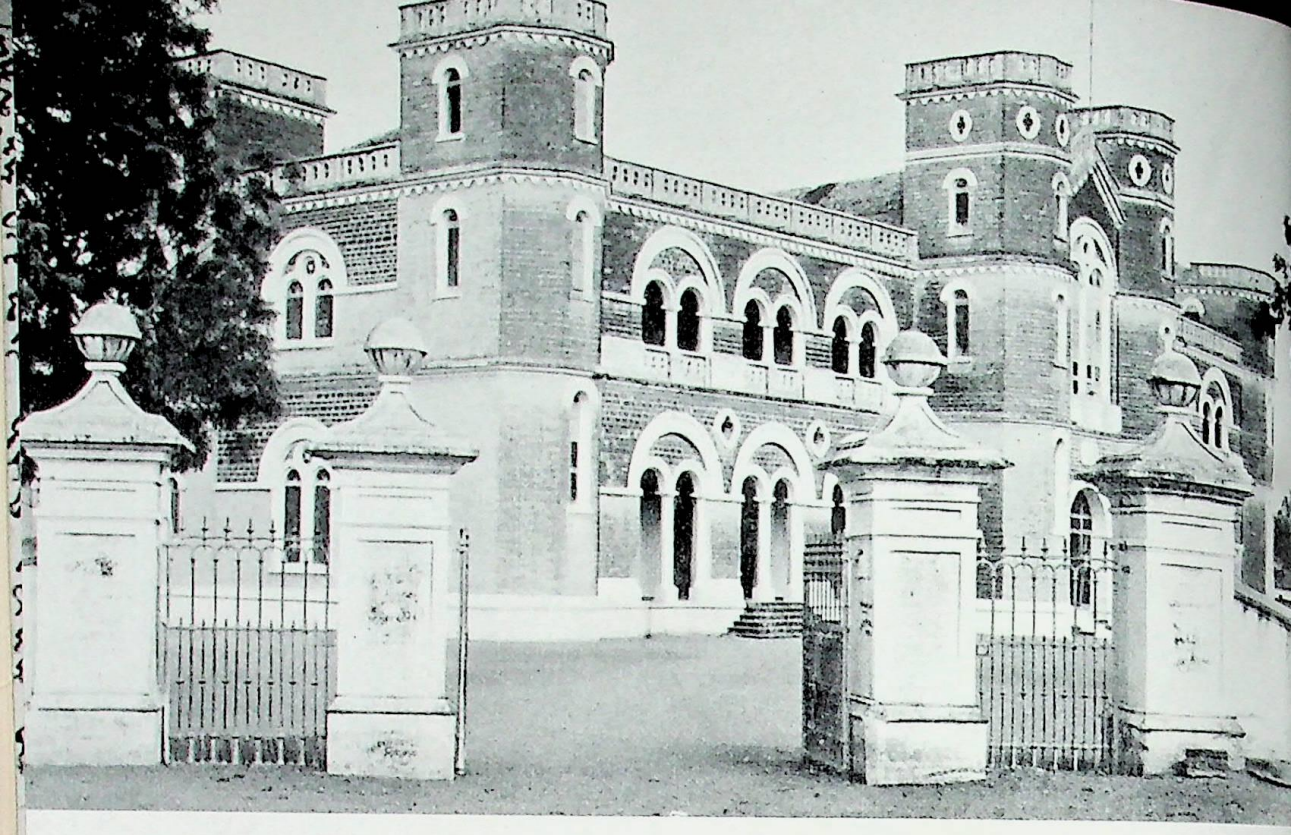
Madhowrao Umbashunker.
Veljee Devjee.
Jyntilal Venilal.
Krustnarao Pandoorung.
Krumchund Otumchund.
Jyashunker Lalshunker.

The Rajasthanik Court has jurisdiction throughout Kattywar with the powers of the Chief Political Court of a Prant in regard to the class of cases which belong to its jurisdiction. The decrees and orders of the Court will be recognised by the Courts of the Kattywar Agency.

The Rajasthanik Court will sit at Rajkote, or at any other place within the province of Kattywar which from time to time may be found most convenient.

NINE] Notification in Kathiawar Political Agency Gazette (Sept. 4, 1873) announcing appointment of "Karamchund Otumchand" as member of Rajasthanik Court. (page 181)

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Alfred High School. "Barely scraped through with 247½ marks out of total 625 . . . position in the University 404th, 5th in Kattyawar High School". (page 218)



Gandhiji at fourteen (wearing cap). "I saw that a man of truth must also be a man of care."(page 207)

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Gandhiji's sister Raliat. "Moniya was restless as Mercury". (page 194)



Gandhiji's brother Lakshmidas. "Father disapproved of dissection . . . intended you for the bar". (p. 219)



Gandhiji at 17 with Lakshmidas. "Morality is the basis of things and . . . truth . . . the substance of all morality".
(page 217)

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Gandhiji at a meeting of Vegetarians in the Isle of Wight 1890. Bottom row (right to left): Gandhiji and Dr. Josiah Oldfield. Top row: Henry Salt on extreme left.



Dr. Pranjivan Mehta.
"Finding him in flannels he smiled." (page 230)

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PART TWO
THE COMING OF THE MAHATMA

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CHAPTER VII

A WHIFF OF THE ROMANTIC PAST

1

FAMED IN legend and song is Kathiawar or Saurashtra, the land of the intrepid Kathis. It was here that Lord Krishna, after his flight from Mathura in the north, settled and established a kingdom with Dvarika as its capital—now a famous place of pilgrimage on the westernmost seaboard of India. In recent times it has given birth to two of India's greatest sons—Swami Dayananda, founder of one of the three great reform movements in Hinduism, and Mahatma Gandhi.

Sometimes called "India in miniature" on account of the variety of its landscape and the composite character of its society and culture, Kathiawar is a squarish peninsula jutting boldly into the Arabian Sea, from the west coast of India, like an outstretched elbow with the palm turned sharply inward at the wrist. Twenty thousand eight hundred and eighty-eight square miles in area, on the south-west and on the south it is bounded by the Arabian Sea, on the north-west by the Gulf of Cutch and on the east by the Gulf of Cambay.

Along its northern border stretches a flat desert called the Ran. In the rainy season it is a shallow lake; in the dry season a desolate plain swept by hot, scorching winds and dust-devils. At midday, the glittering deposits of salt, with which it is studded, make the eyes of the weary traveller ache by their blinding glare, while the treacherous mirage lures him to his destruction.

In striking contrast with this is the vista from the sea of the southern coast with its white flat-roofed picturesque towns. Behind the line of white breakers and foreshore, gay with dancing fishing-boats, rise deep-green palm groves, while up the broad estuaries is revealed in fitful glimpses an alluring prospect of rolling plains and far off hills.

Between the two comes Sorath—the homeland of the Gandhis, with its idyllic villages nestling among gardens and brakes of sugar-cane, and shady groves and green fields that delight the eye the year round.

The culture of Kathiawar is saturated with the Krishna legend which animates its famous folk dance, the Ras, and numerous ballads and songs that are on the lips of everybody—the prince and the peasant alike.

According to the Mahabharata, the Yadavas held sway over the entire region between Prabhas Patan with its famous Somnath

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temple and the Girnar Hill beyond Porbandar. They prospered and made the country prosper, then fell into luxury, brought upon themselves by their evil ways the curse of Lord Krishna, and destroyed one another in a drunken brawl which has given to us the word *Yadavi* for fratricidal strife and civil war. In his last days, Gandhiji used often to recall this episode to warn the people of India of the fate that would befall them unless they mended their ways.

The region has been hallowed by a galaxy of saints and devotees whose memory is still cherished by the masses. Shri Vallabhacharya from Telangana in the fifteenth century and Sahajananda Swami from Ayodhya established themselves here. They took the message of the Krishna school of Bhakti to the Vaishyas, Shudras and women, who were excluded from that privilege by orthodoxy. Narasimha Mehta, the friend of the "untouchables" and composer of Gandhiji's favourite hymn—"Vaishnava Jana", which he had sung to him at every important occasion in his life, lived in Junagadh. His songs are sung to this day even by the so-called outcastes. Dvarika is associated with Mirabai, the poet-princess and author of numerous devotional songs, whom Gandhiji used to hold up to Indian womanhood as a symbol of the love of God, and after whom he named his English disciple Miss Madeline Slade, Mirabehn, when she wanted to adopt an Indian name.

The province is studded with a number of celebrated shrines and places of pilgrimage. There is the historic Somnath temple, at Prabhas Patan. Madhavpur, Tulasishyam, Sudamapuri (Porbandar) and Dvarika all, associated with Lord Krishna, attract Hindus from all over India, while the Girnar and the Palitana hills are sacred to the Jainas.

From ancient times, Kathiawar has been known for its skilful shipwrights. Vessels built in Kathiawar at one time sailed as far out as Singapore and Java on the one hand and the Persian Gulf, Arabia and Zanzibar in East Africa on the other. The *Kharvas* of Kathiawar are among some of the most skilful seamen in India.

Their maritime contacts have fostered in the people of Kathiawar an enterprising and adventurous spirit, tact and the instinct for business. The Memans of Kathiawar are the shrewdest traders in India. In the seventies and the eighties of the last century, a number of Kathiawaris built themselves highly successful business connections in Tanganyika and South Africa, and became multimillionaires. It was to one of them, Sheth Dada Abdulla, that Gandhiji later owed his introduction to South Africa.

The first Muslim incursion in Kathiawar took place in the eleventh century with the sack of Somnath by Mahmood of Ghazni. From the fourteenth century onward it has had a series of Muslim rulers and deputies of one Muslim dynasty or another. The Islamic influence has consequently left a deep impress on its language and culture. Gujarati,

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of which Kathiawari is a dialect, is interlarded with about forty per cent. words of Arabic and Persian origin.

Unlike some other parts of India, as in the extreme south where orthodoxy became intensified, Kathiawar has a strong eclectic tradition. Besides Zoroastrianism and Christianity, the Sufi mysticism of the Muslims also has mingled with the diverse currents of Hindu religious reform, and introduced into it an element of broad toleration. In Porbandar, there even used to be a *Haveli* where the name of Allah was chanted along with that of Ishvar, and of Rama with Rahim's.

Politically, the map of Kathiawar looked till recently like a jig-saw puzzle. In the middle of the eighteenth century, when Lord Wellesley annexed the territory of the Nawab of Surat after the latter's death, all Zamindars, however petty, who paid tribute to the Moghul, were recognised as "princes". The whole of Kathiawar was, as a result, studed by a multitude of kinglets, some of them consisting of not more than one or two villages, while the ruler of one of them was said to be "sovereign of nothing but a well!"[1]

The storm, that swept over and convulsed the whole of northern and Central India in 1857, and its aftermath scarcely raised a ripple in Kathiawar. The Kathiawar chiefs were too preoccupied with their petty, internecine quarrels to notice anything else. The Rising had, however, an indirect aftereffect. It led the British to reverse their previous attitude towards the Indian States which, in Lord Canning's words, had during the Rising "served as breakwaters to the storm which would otherwise have swept over us in one great wave."[2] In 1864, two hundred and twelve States were newly created by an arbitrary decision of the Crown, besides the twelve first and second class States that already existed, thereby giving rise to one of the toughest problems for the future administrators of India.

The survival of these States, however, served one useful purpose. They provided a sanctuary for indigenous talent when it was progressively being squeezed out of British India. Some of India's foremost statesmen, including Dadabhai Naoroji and Pherozeshah Mehta, found field for their genius in the Indian States, and nationalists and revolutionaries of the calibre of Aurobindo Ghosh and Shyamji Krishna Varma found assylum there when they were barred from all opportunity in British India. Likewise, for six generations the talent of the Gandhi family matured, blossomed and bore fruit in one or the other of the Kathiawar States. Had their lot been cast in British India, it is very likely that their talent would have either withered or wasted away.

2

The farthest back that Mahatma Gandhi's ancestory can be traced is Lalji Gandhi. Originally an inhabitant of Kutiyana in Junagadh

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State, where he was in the employ of a Muslim Khokar family as estate manager, he became *daftari* or Naib Dewan in Porbandar. A *daftari*, those days, was the right hand man of the Dewan or Prime Minister, and held a position analogous to that of a Home Member in the cabinet these days. His house still stands in Limbada Chowk adjacent to Khokar Durbar's mansion in Kutiyana, though it has ceased to belong to the Gandhis, its possession having passed into the hands of a Meman family that has since migrated to Karachi in Pakistan.

After Lalji Gandhi, his son Ramji Gandhi and grandson Rahidas Gandhi succeeded in turn in that office. Rahidas Gandhi had two sons, Harjivan Gandhi and Daman Gandhi. Both of them became Naib Dewans of Porbandar in succession.

Harjivan Gandhi's only son, Uttamchand Gandhi, father of Karamchand Gandhi and grandfather of Mahatma Gandhi, was the first in the Gandhi family to become Prime Minister.

Of stately build, with long arms that reached down to the knees, a broad, prominent forehead and keen, alert, deep-searching eyes, Uttamchand Gandhi—Ota Bapa, as he was affectionately called by the people—must have been a remarkable man. On all accounts he was a man of exalted character and indomitable courage, gifted with an exceptionally versatile, vigorous and original mind. His formal education was of the most elementary type but he was of the stuff of which born administrators and statesmen are made. At seventeen, through his uncle Daman, he secured the job of a Collector of Customs in the port of Porbandar. By his tact, common sense and resourcefulness, he made a success of it. With time on his hands, he turned to account every moment of it to help his uncle in his office work. His apprenticeship in his uncle's office gave him the training that laid the foundation of his future career.

One day Rana Khimoji (1813-31) sent for Daman Gandhi. He had an important piece of work. The latter happened at that time to be away. Unperturbed, young Uttamchand went in stead and with calm confidence asked the Rana if in his uncle's absence he could be of any service. The Rana was struck by his self-possession, intelligence and address. "A rather difficult problem has to be tackled," he said to him. "Do you feel, young man, you can handle it all by yourself ?"

"There is hardly anything that cannot be managed," Uttamchand replied, "given my ruler's blessings."

"Well, the contractor appointed to collect the customs at Madhavpur has not for some time been paying the revenue and has been defying the Darbar. He has to be brought to his senses."

"That, Sir, is easily done. May I proceed to Madhavpur at once?"

"But tell me first what will you do there on arrival? How will you act?"

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"That I can decide only after I have studied the situation on the spot. All I need is your blessings. It is not on my ability but your prestige that I count."

British power had just begun to penetrate into Kathiawar. Conditions in Princely Kathiawar were chaotic. The rule of the "strong man" prevailed, and it was common practice for one chief to increase his power by grabbing the territory or the revenues of the neighbouring chief. Ota Gandhi very shrewdly guessed that the defiant customs collector was acting at the instigation and with the strong backing of a third party and that this in the present case was none other than the Junagadh Durbar. Realising that Porbandar with its small size and meagre resources was in no position to try conclusions with its powerful neighbour, he decided to adopt a diplomatic line.

There were a number of small fragments of Porbandar territory like islets all over the Junagadh State. The sovereignty of Porbandar over these enclaves was nominal and its exercise led to no end of difficulties and bickering with the Junagadh authorities. Ota Bapa first had a careful survey made of these enclaves and then opened negotiations with the Junagadh State officials, offering to cede to Junagadh all those bits of territory, including the right to collect revenue, provided Junagadh did not claim any rights in the coastal strip from Madhavpur to Porbandar. This area was at that time a sandy waste and was considered to be of no value. But Ota Bapa, with uncanny foresight, assessed its immense possibilities after it had been developed. The Junagadh Durbar readily accepted his offer. The Porbandar State was thereby able to enlarge its boundaries by the addition of a sizable, continuous strip of territory with full rights over it, besides obtaining respite from the machinations of Junagadh, which thereafter automatically ceased.

The Rana was so pleased with the success of Uttamchand's mission that he appointed him as his Prime Minister. Later, when the dam at the river Bhadar, that Ota Bapa had envisaged, was built, this coastal strip became the richest source of revenue to the State. It was due largely to the gains of the treaty of Madhavpur negotiated by him, it is said, that the Porbandar State was later classified as a first class State.

The finances of Porbandar were in a parlous state when Ota Bapa took over its Prime Ministership. It was heavily in debt to a Kachhi trader known as Sunderji, and all its revenues, after barely covering the cost of administration, were year after year being appropriated by the creditor in lieu of repayment of debt. The first thing Ota Bapa did on taking over charge was to make a close study of all the documents relating to the loan transaction. In one of them, toward the close, he found a provision that had all along been overlooked by one party and ignored by the other. It was to the effect that the creditor could in repayment of debt claim the right over the major sources of

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revenue only. The income from the residuary sources belonged to the State. Confronted with this clause, Sunderji had to renounce claim to any income besides the customs and the land revenue. The income from sundry other sources like the stamp duty, the duty on the sale of land and the like, began once again to flow into the treasury and the finances were stabilised.

As Dewan of Porbandar, Ota Bapa received 2,000 Koris, or some seven hundred rupees per mensem. Provisions for the whole family were supplied from the Durbar stores or in lieu 250 Koris as sumptuary allowance. This did not come to very much, especially as Ota Bapa gave away half his income to various charities. Large-heartedness was an outstanding trait of his character. On the occasion of the marriage of his two sons, he invited the whole town to dinner by pasting, in the traditional manner, rice grains on a Svastika mark at the city gate. The wedding celebrations, unprecedented in the history of the town, lasted for a week, the Rana himself taking a leading part in them. Wedding presents poured in upon the popular Dewan. But conscientious man that he was, Ota Bapa turned over all of them to the Rana saying, "All these belong to you since they have come from your subjects." Deeply moved, the Rana tried to dissuade him, but in vain. In the end he ordered the presents to be deposited in the State Treasury. At the same time he directed that all the expenses of the wedding incurred by his Dewan should be debited to the State. "Your sons," he said to Ota Bapa, "are my sons."

Ota Bapa's success had excited the envy and jealousy of other courtiers and made him many enemies. But Rana Khimoji was a shrewd judge of men. During his lifetime their intrigues could not prevail. But they profited from their opportunity after his death in 1831.

Vikmatji, the heir-apparent, was on his father's death only eight years of age. During his minority, the affairs of the State were managed by his mother, the Queen Regent, Rupali Ba. .The administration, as Mr. D. P. Blane, acting Political Agent in Kathiawar reported, had "with few exceptions been efficiently conducted by the present Minister Otum Gandy".[3] It was, therefore, hoped that little change would take place. But the Queen Regent was a capable, strong-willed, temperamental woman. Her treasurer and keeper of the stores, one Khimji Kothari, was a strict man. He was not popular with her maids, as he would not meet their demands without written instructions of the Durbar. They so poisoned the Queen Regent's ears that she vowed vengeance against him. The Kothari, finding himself in imminent peril, threw himself at the feet of Lakshmi Ma, Ota Bapa's wife, and said: "Mother, you alone can save me. I seek justice."

"You will have it, my son," Lakshmi Ma answered. "Not a hair of your head will be injured."

When Ota Bapa came home, she told him of her pledge.

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"But the Rani has threatened to put him to death, and has ordered him to be produced before her," Ota Bapa said to her, taken aback.

"Nevertheless, he is entitled to justice. My word is given."

"Your word will be honoured."

Being ordered to produce the object of her wrath before her so that she could mete out summary justice, Ota Bapa told the Queen Regent that he was bound to obey his ruler's orders but there must be a guarantee that the offender would get strict justice after a fair trial.

The Rani thundered that her will was law and justice.

The Dewan tried to reason with her. Beside herself with rage, she threatened that force would be employed against him unless he carried out her orders. After a few days, finding that her threats had no effect, she sent a contingent of the State forces to bring the offending Kothari to her presence.

The Kothari, sensing the danger, went into hiding. The city gate of Porbandar used to be locked after ten at night. There were only two keys. One was kept at the Durbar, the other remained with the Dewan. Ota Bapa, in anticipation of what was coming, sent a trusted messenger to the Kothari with the duplicate key and helped him to slip out of the town overnight. With his family he then barricaded the house and calmly awaited the worst. Assembling his five sons and his wife, he told them that the moment had come for them to lay down their lives at the altar of truth and justice and they must be prepared to embrace death joyfully.

When the Rani's contingent arrived, they found Ota Bapa's house barricaded and had to return with their mission unaccomplished. Baulked of her revenge, the Rani ordered that the defences of the Dewan's house should be demolished by cannon, and a piece was brought for the purpose.

Dewanship in Kathiawar those days was a risky job and it was a recognised practice for a Dewan, before accepting office, to ask the Ruler to provide a surety as a safeguard against oppression and abuse of authority. The man who had stood surety in Ota Bapa's case was one Ghulam Mohammad Makrani, captain of a body of Makran Arab troopers. There used to be two companies of them in Porbandar. Intrigue and counter-intrigue were the order of the day. Makranis, as a neutral body outside all local factions, were regarded as the most trustworthy surety by all the parties in the State and the protection of the Royal Palace, the Treasury and the Dewan's house was, as a rule, entrusted to them. A small body of them used to mount guard at Ota Bapa's residence day and night. They, on this occasion, defended it true to their pledge. Ghulam Mohammad, their captain, died fighting.

Ota Bapa's house had massive stone walls. But they could not withstand the shelling. Before long, one of them was breached in two places, and began to crumble, while inside, Ota Bapa with the members

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of his family prayed for strength to remain unshaken in their resolve. The news of the Rani's highhandedness had, in the meantime, luckily reached the British Agency at Rajkot. The Agency intervened and the shelling was stopped.

There used to be a memorial niche in the temple of Shrinathji, adjoining Ota Bapa's house, commemorating the brave deed of the Captain of the Makrani guards. The marks of the cannon balls also were visible for a long time on the outer wall of Ota Bapa's house till alterations were made in it when the house was incorporated in the Mahatma Gandhi Kirti Mandir.

Ota Bapa, after this incident, left Porbandar with his wife, Lakshmi Ma, and went to live in his ancestral home at Kutiyana. Following it, the Queen Regent confiscated his house with all the property and ordered it to be sealed.

When the Nawab of Junagadh learnt of this, he invited him to his Durbar. Ota Bapa went and promptly saluted the Nawab with the left hand. Asked why that discourtesy, he gave the reply that though a difference of opinion had forced him to leave off service of Porbandar State, it had made no difference in his allegiance. His right hand being already pledged to Porbandar, he could offer to the Nawab the services only of his left hand.

The Nawab was pleased with Ota Bapa's courageous reply. "I would give half my kingdom to have a Minister like you," he said. But Ota Bapa told him that he was done with service. To maintain him the Nawab appointed him *Karbhari* of Kutiyana Mahal and issued an order exempting him and his successors from payment of the customs duty in case they should wish to carry on business in Kutiyana. At the same time to keep up appearances, he awarded him a nominal punishment by requiring him to stand in the sun for a few minutes with his shoes off!

With this sinecure Ota Bapa could live quietly. In the mornings he went for long rides on his favourite Kathiawadi mare, on which he lavished great affection, and devoted the rest of his time to the things of the spirit.

The ancestral faith of the Gandhis was Vaishnavism—a school of *Bhakti* (devotion) which teaches that, with intense love and complete self-surrender, God is accessible to all, irrespective of rank and even culture. The Pushtimarg Vaishnavism of the Vallabhacharya sect, in which Ota Bapa had grown, inculcates Krishna-Bhakti—the way of realisation through love as personified by Lord Krishna. But Ota Bapa was very much attracted to one Khaki Baba, a follower of the order of Ramanand. He even had a *chowk* (public square) in Porbandar named after him. It is today known as Khakhi Chowk.

Towards the close of the fourteenth century, Ramanand, a follower of the Ramanuja school of Vaishnavism, finding his church too narrow and fettered by the trammels of caste, broke away from them and preached

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the gospel of Rama's boundless love for men of every race and creed. His twelve disciples included a leather-worker, a barber, a washerman, a Muslim weaver, and a woman. Among the countless singers thrown up by the mighty torrent of religious revival and reform inaugurated by him, was Goswami Tulasidas, whose name is on the lips of millions in India, and who in his *Ramcharit Manas*, or *Tulasi Ramayana*, gave to North India its Bible. Rama, the object of Tulasidas's worship, whom he has enshrined in his devotional epic, he explains, is not the Rama of history. Not a mortal man, "He is the Infinite Being incarnate as Rama . . . passionless, formless, uncreated, the universal soul, the supreme spirit, the All-pervading, whose shadow is the world, who has become incarnate and done many things, only for the love he bears to his devotees, all gracious and compassionate to the humble, protector of the poor, all-good, all-powerful, the Lord Raghuraj."

A good part of Ota Bapa's time, towards the close of his life, was devoted to listening to the reading of this immortal epic. It became the consolation of his son, Kaba Gandhi, during his last illness, and later of his grandson, Mahatma Gandhi.

After the death of Rupali Ba in 1841, when the administration of the State came into the hands of Rana Vikmatji, the Nawab of Junagadh used his good offices to get Ota Bapa back to Porbandar. The new Rana restored to Ota Bapa all his property, and an effort was made to get him back as the Dewan once again. But Ota Bapa declined. His son Karamchand Gandhi, alias Kaba Gandhi, was already in the State service as the Rana's personal assistant and amanuensis. On Ota Bapa's refusal to return to his post the Rana appointed him first as a joint *Karbhari* and then as his Dewan. He was twenty-five when he received the silver inkstand and perforated sandpot[4]—the traditional insignia of Prime Ministership. The year must have been 1847.

3

In the Mahatma Gandhi Kirti Mandir at Porbandar, there are two portraits in oil, one of Karamchand Gandhi, Gandhiji's father, the other of Putli Ba, his mother. The latter is an imaginative reconstruction by the artist from a likeness of one of Putli Ba's in-laws. That of Kaba Gandhi, however, is authentic. Years ago, I saw the original photograph when it was brought to Gandhiji for his autograph in his Ashram at Sabarmati. Somewhat stocky and short-statured, broad-shouldered, white-moustached, wearing a shawl and Kathiawari turban, he impresses one by his poise and dignity. The chin is firm but not aggressive. The tightly-compressed, thick, sensuous lips proclaim a man of strong feeling and determination but of few words. The countenance bears the stamp of authority and mellowed wisdom that inspires and invites confidence but forbids familiarity. The eyes haunt and hold. Kindly, intelligent

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and alert, they look into the depth of one's being with a clear, steady gaze.

The fifth of Ota Bapa's six sons, Karamchand Gandhi inherited all his father's genius—his brilliance, integrity, statesmanship and independence of mind. "Truthful, brave and generous but short-tempered" is the description of him left by his adoring son. He was said to have read up to the fifth Gujarati standard. "Of history and geography," Gandhiji has recorded in his *My Experiments with Truth*, "he was innocent, but his rich experience of practical affairs stood him in good stead in the solution of the most intricate questions and in managing hundreds of men." Lacking religious erudition, he had a deep religious yearning, cultivated the company of sadhus and holy men, and had portions of the *Gita* by heart, which he recited regularly at the time of worship. Towards the end of his life he set about to learn Sanskrit with the help of a Shastri. In Gandhiji's words: "He had the kind of religious culture which visits to the temples and listening to religious discourses make available to many Hindus."

For the nearly twenty-eight years that he served as Prime Minister of Porbandar, he brought to bear upon the discharge of his duties a single-minded devotion which excluded every other consideration save the interest of the State. On the whole this was the most peaceful period of his life and the heyday of the Gandhi family's affluence. But towards the close, fortune began to turn fickle. There were frequent brushes with British authority. The prestige of the Rulers and their Dewans suffered further eclipse.

The consolidation of British power in Kathiawar had been proceeding apace since Ota Bapa's time. In 1867 it was decided to extend British jurisdiction by allowing the right of appeal against the Ruling Chiefs' decisions in certain matters that were hitherto deemed within the Chiefs' sole jurisdiction, and a Court was set up under the Political Assistant, Western Division, for the hearing of such appeals. This meant further encroachment on the powers of the States which no ruler or a Dewan worthy of his salt could have relished. The Rana of Porbandar was requested by the Political Assistant to send his Dewan, Kaba Gandhi, to serve as a member on it. The Rana wrote back saying that his Dewan being laid up with fever, another person should be appointed in his place, whereupon he received this peremptory note, dated October 1, 1867, on behalf of Captain H.T. Hebbert, Political Assistant, Western Division, Rajkot:

> The Hon'ble Karamchand has been appointed member on the Committee on behalf of your State to start the work of this court from October 1. We wrote to you that he should present himself at Rajkot on September 30. We have now received your letter in reply thereto, dated September 27, saying that Kaba Gandhi being ill with fever, Motilal should be taken in his place. This

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is in line with what you have always done, namely, to refuse at the last moment to fulfil your commitments and ignore our written directives.

Kaba Gandhi's name was settled after it was submitted by you. Now, without sending a substitute, you write to suggest that another person, who holds an appointment under a different jurisdiction, should be entrusted with that work. You have not considered, as you ought to have, with whom the authority to relieve that person rests. Nor have you stopped to ask yourself how a thing once settled can be unsettled at the last moment.

A reply like this in regard to a member duly appointed on the Committee, arriving on the date fixed (for the Committee to begin work) is bound to involve the Committee in much expense. It has to be considered, too, as to who shall be responsible for the delay in the work.

If at the very start such excuses were to be entertained, how can the Committee carry on its work? In view of these difficulties, we find it necessary, much against our will, to *impose a penalty*. You are therefore informed that a penalty of rupees five per day will be exacted till Kaba Gandhi attends, and that if he does not attend within ten days the amount of the penalty may have to be enhanced. (Italics mine)

It seems that with the support of his Rana Kaba Gandhi was able to keep his end up at least on this occasion. Then this prop also crumbled. Rana Vikmatji's son Madhavsinh, the heir-apparent, took to drink under the evil influence of his boon companion, one Lakshman Khavas, and died as a result of indulgence in it. The Rana was a man of irreproachable but highly choleric character. When he learnt of the circumstances of his son's death, he in a fit of rage ordered the nose and ears of the Khavas to be cut off. The Khavas after the mutilation flung himself from a terrace of the palace and died as a result of the injuries sustained. The British authorities, when they came to know of it, deprived the Rana of first-class powers, which he had hitherto enjoyed and in 1869 degraded him to the third class. The Rana thereafter took to religion and began more and more to neglect the affairs of the State. Kaba Gandhi felt extremely unhappy, but carried on for a few years.

In 1873 a very influential body known as the Rajasthanic Court was set up to adjudicate disputes about land between the chiefs and members of younger branches of their family and such other cases in which landed estates held on a semi-feudal tenure were involved. It consisted of a British Officer as President and six members chosen by Government out of a lot submitted by the chiefs. Of these six members, the President chose two to sit with him as assessors, and either party to the dispute had a right of objecting to one of the members. By a notification dated September 1, 1873, J. B. Peile, the then Acting Political Agent, appointed "Krum Chund Otum Chund" as "one of the six members selected by the Government from a lot of twelve proposed by the Durbars."[5] He held that

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position as a nominee of the Rana of Porbandar till he was called upon to serve as Dewan of Rajkot in the following year.

Thakore Bavajiraj of Rajkot, when he succeeded to the *gaddi* on November 8, 1862, on the death of his father Meramanji, was a minor. During his minority, the affairs of the State were carried on by his grandmother Naniba up till 1867, when they were entrusted to a British officer. In November, 1874, the Thakore, on coming of age, was entrusted with limited powers and Karamchand Gandhi was appointed as his *Karbhari* in place of Syed Hamid, his brother, Tulasidas, succeeding him as Prime Minister of Porbandar.

In the following year, Kaba Gandhi was appointed on a Boundaries Committee that was set up to settle the boundaries between the various Kathiawar States. Col. J. W. Watson, who was later Political Agent at Rajkot from December, 1876, to January, 1877, and in June of that year became President of the Rajasthanic Court, was so impressed by his work as a member of that Committee that when in January, 1876, Bavajiraj was to be invested with full powers, and the State needed a capable Dewan, he strongly recommended Kaba Gandhi for it and on November 7, 1876, Kaba Gandhi became Dewan of Rajkot with extended powers (Appendix D).

As Prime Minister of Rajkot State Kaba Gandhi displayed the same qualities of conscientious devotion to duty and independence of mind that had distinguished his tenure of office as Dewan of Porbandar. Such was his reputation for integrity and strict impartiality as a judge that if in a suit anyone appealed against his judgment to the Thakore, the Thakore would tell him to go back to Kaba Gandhi, convince him of the justice of his cause and rest assured that the Dewan would not fail to give him full satisfaction.

When Kaba Gandhi had been Prime Minister of Rajkot for some time, the ruler of Vankaner asked the Thakore of Rajkot for the services of his capable and experienced Dewan. Mohan was then nine years of age, reading in the school at Rajkot. Vankaner, like Rajkot, was another second-class State, twenty-five miles to the north of Rajkot. Its affairs had fallen into a chaotic state, owing to corruption and mal-administration and needed a thorough clean-up. The Thakore of Rajkot could ill spare his Prime Minister, but reluctantly agreed to the request of the Vankaner Chief as a friendly act towards a neighbouring State. Kaba Gandhi took office on April 28, 1878, as Chief *Karbhari* of Vankaner State after obtaining a written assurance from the Thakore of Rajkot that if for any reason he wished to return to his original post within a period of one year, his lien on it would be kept intact (Appendix G).

Before taking over charge as Chief *Karbhari* of Vankaner, Kaba Gandhi had his powers clearly defined and further made a stipulation that he would be allowed a free hand in the day-to-day administration, so long as he acted within his powers. The appointment was to be on a contract basis for a period of five years. If the conditions agreed to were

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not kept, the Dewan would be free to resign and the State would in that event be bound to pay him full pay for the stipulated period.

The ruler accepted the conditions. But when Kaba Gandhi began to overhaul the administration, the Raja Saheb started interfering. Matters came to a head when he overruled the auction by Kaba Gandhi of the produce received in revenue on the ground that his consent had not been obtained before the deal was closed, and directed that the auction should be held *de novo* in his presence. Kaba Gandhi protested that what he had done was in the best interests of the State and that he had acted within his powers in closing the deal after he had made sure that the rates offered by the merchants and accepted by him were higher than those obtaining in the neighbouring States. The matter, therefore, could not be reopened. The ruler insisted. Kaba Gandhi sent him word that in that circumstance he did not wish to continue in the service of the State and arrangements should be made for him to go back at once. The ruler and his officials shilly-shallied. He, thereupon, gave notice that he would refuse to touch any food or even drink water till the necessary arrangements were made for him to leave.

Knowing well his temperament, the Ruler let him go, but after a fortnight, sent him a letter of apology and regret. Kaba Gandhi relented and returned to Vankaner. But finding that the ruler had no mind to cease from interfering, he declined to resume charge and asked for his account to be settled. The Ruler was angry and demanded a formal letter of resignation. Kaba Gandhi there and then wrote his letter saying that since the Ruler had agreed to certain conditions before appointing him Dewan, and since he had, under the influence of self-seekers and intriguers, paid no heed to his oral and written representations in regard to the proper discharge of his office, nor taken any of the steps that he had, on the ruler's own suggestion, set down in his letter addressed to the person whom the ruler had appointed as arbitrator in the matter, he had no choice left but regretfully to tender his resignation. "*Fidvi* Karamchand", therefore, begged to be relieved of his office, failing which he would be returning to Rajkot between January 9 and January 19, 1879, and leave instructions for the charge to be made over to whomsoever the Ruler might direct.

The letter was dated January 8, 1879. In terms of his contract, he asked for the balance of his salary for the full five years to be paid to him.

The Raja Saheb did not like the reference to the breach of agreement in the letter and suggested that the offending portion should be suitably altered in which case Kaba Gandhi could have his salary in full. Kaba Gandhi demurred. There was no sense in leaving that portion out, he said, since that was the sole reason for the resignation. The ruler, thereupon, offered to "waive" the formality and to pay a lump sum of Rs. 10,000 for "services rendered and received".

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Kaba Gandhi insisted that his resignation be formally accepted and he be paid in full what was his due, or not at all. He was not willing to accept as a matter of grace anything, he said, to which he was not clearly entitled.

The ruler tried to cajole: "You won't find another ruler like me willing to pay such a big sum without any formalities. I hear you intend sending your son (Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi) to England for study. The largesse I am offering will come handy then. Reconsider your decision, therefore, if not for your, then for your children's sake."

Kaba Gandhi answered: "Large-hearted princes, whom God has blessed with plenty, may yet be found, but you won't easily find another humble servant like me who, though in need, would refuse to be tempted even by a largesse such as yours, at the cost of truth."

A common friend, Navalram by name, who was instrumental in bringing Kaba Gandhi to Vankaner as Dewan, put in: "You know the consequences of incurring the displeasure of princes."

To this Kaba Gandhi made no reply. Seeing that he was not to be moved from his resolve, Navalram had the bags of money quietly placed under the seat of the carriage that was to take Kaba Gandhi to Rajkot. One bag could not be accommodated there. It was tucked away under the pallet.

Finding something hard under him, as he settled down in the carriage, Kaba Gandhi asked his faithful domestic servant Purshottam:

"Pasiya, what is this?"

"How should I know," the servant replied. "Ask Navalram."

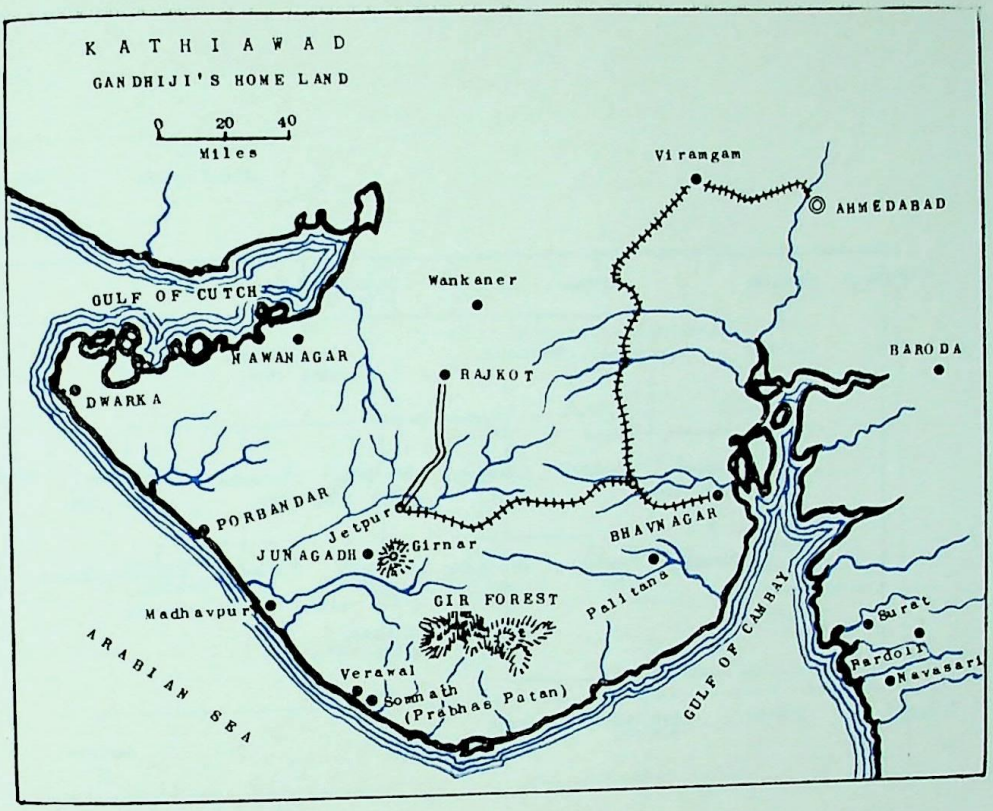
Navalram being asked said, "Ask the Ruler. It is his wish."

Without a word, Kaba Gandhi himself removed all the bags from the carriage and placed them on the brick platform before the house to be returned to the ruler. Then only did he start on his journey back to Rajkot.

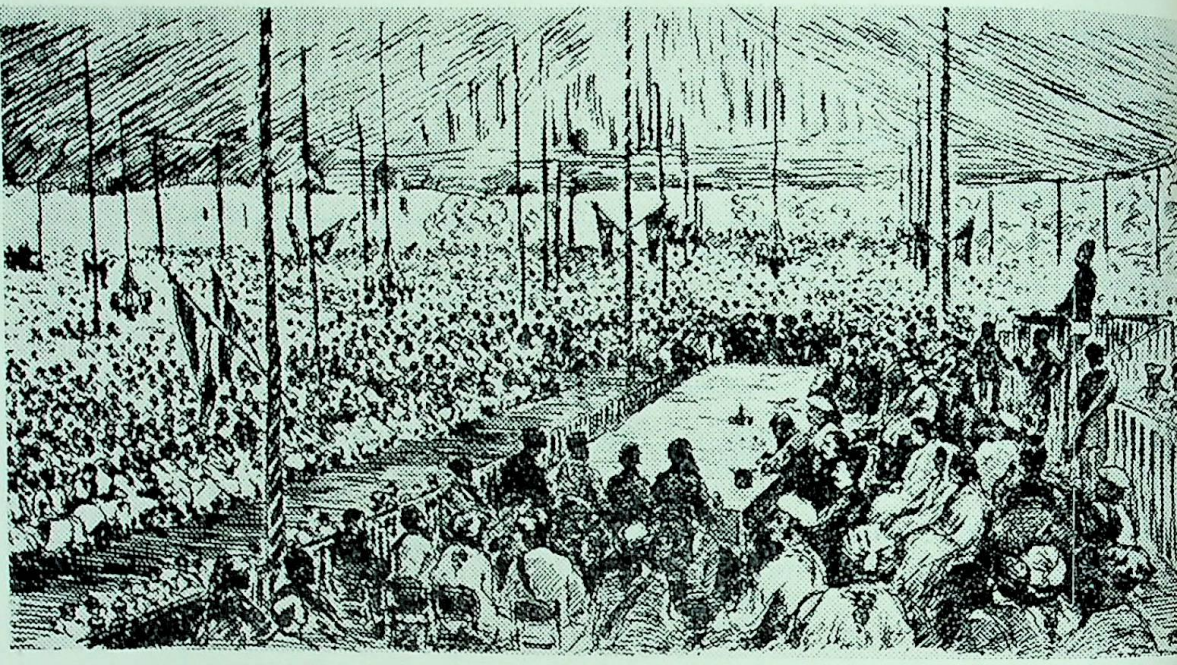
Purshottam outlived his master. Many years afterwards, he was at his own request retired by the Mahatma on a handsome gratuity. With the money thus provided he settled as a petty shopkeeper in Gosa village in Saurashtra.

The administration of Rajkot State had greatly deteriorated after Kaba Gandhi's departure. As soon as Bavajiraj, the Thakore of Rajkot, learnt that Kaba Gandhi had returned to his State and that he was not keeping fit, he paid him a visit and invited him to resume his post of Dewan as before. But Kaba Gandhi pleaded ill-health. The Thakore left him with the word that he would send for him when he was well enough. But then, as princes do, he forgot all about it. Kaba Gandhi had several influential friends among the Agency officials. When no invitation from the Thakore came, he, with their help, began to explore other avenues of employment and finally decided to take service in Junagadh State. But before he could go there, he again fell ill. When the

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INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS AT CALCUTTA (1890)

Sketch by Mr R. W. Allan, the artist, who accompanied Mr W.S. Caine, M. P., published by the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Extra No. 57. Reproduced in *India*, August 28, 1891.

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Thakore of Rajkot came to know of it, he once more pressed upon him his offer and on April 4, 1879, appointed him Dewan.

Impulsive by nature, the Thakore drank to excess. Everybody was afraid of him. But he stood in awe of his Dewan. If he happened to be at his cups when Kaba Gandhi came to see him, he would hurriedly have the paraphernalia of drinking removed and the room well-aired before calling him in. Once, while he, with his minions, had gone out for a stroll by the bank of the Aji river, he took a wild fancy to the young bride of one of his subjects and decided to force his way into her house at night. The Superintendent of Police was a cousin of Kaba Gandhi. He informed Kaba Gandhi of it. Kaba Gandhi told him that if he, as Superintendent of Police, out of fear of losing his job, failed to protect the life, honour and property of the people, as his duty demanded, he would have proved faithless to his trust and false to his oath of allegiance.

"I shall not fail in my duty," the cousin assured him. Accordingly, at night he posted his men round the house which was threatened by the Thakore's nocturnal visit. When the reconnoitring party of the Thakore arrived with a ladder, he had them promptly arrested and locked up. The next day Kaba Gandhi told the Thakore of the action he had been forced to take and warned him that the British Agency headquarters were not very far from the city wall. If under the evil advice of his associates he persisted in his bad ways, he would bring disgrace upon the Raj and might even lose his *gaddi*. In this way, on numerous occasions, he served his chief by his firmness, courage and outspokenness in scorn of consequences.

At the same time such was his sense of loyalty to his ruler that when once a British Assistant Political Agent spoke disrespectfully in his presence about the Thakore, he boldly stood up for his Chief and dared to join issue with the Assistant Political Agent. The irate official demanded an apology which was refused. For this the Englishman had him arrested and detained under a tree for some hours. But the Dewan's correct, dignified conduct and unyielding loyalty to his Chief in the end won, the demand for apology was waived, and the two became friends.

The Englishman in question was none else than P. S. V. Fitzgerald, who later became the Agent to the Governor in Kathiawar. He had the habit, when he was irritated or displeased, of making people, who came to see him, wait outside his bungalow in the hot sun, which he euphemistically called "Lal Tamboo" (The Red Tent). Once Kaba Gandhi went to see him by appointment and asked the peon to announce him. The official was annoyed and ordered his peon to tell the visitor to wait in the "Lal Tamboo" till he was called. Greatly embarrassed, the poor peon placed a chair in the sun for Kaba Gandhi and asked him to wait till he was called. "Tell your Saheb," the Dewan said to him, "that Karamchand Gandhi called on him by appointment, but presuming

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that the Saheb was not free, he has gone back. If there is anything further that the Saheb wishes to discuss with him, let him write." The Saheb was furious. He complained to the Thakore about his Dewan's "rudeness". The Thakore, with all his vices, was a strong man. He stood by his Dewan and made the Agency official apologise for the insult to his Prime Minister.

A man of very strict principles, Kaba Gandhi never cared to be rich. When land was being allotted for residential purposes in Rajkot, the Thakore gave him the first choice to select any plot he liked for his personal use. But he suspected he was being bought and declined the offer. The Thakore pressed. The relatives joined. But all they could persuade him to accept was just a strip of 400 square yards. Urged by the Thakore to choose a more spacious plot in view of his large family, he answered that his salary was enough for him and he must refuse to be tempted with a bigger plot even though it was being offered free. No wonder that he did not leave behind much property.

Kaba Gandhi was married four times in succession. The first marriage took place when he was fourteen; the second at the age of twenty-five, after the death of his first wife. From his first and second marriages he had two daughters; the third marriage proved issueless, and his wife was stricken with an incurable ailment which made her an invalid for life. Already then fortyish, without a male issue or hope of having any, he yielded to the importunity of his elders and decided to remarry. Going to his wife he asked for her consent. She said: "You may, if you can find someone to offer his daughter's hand in marriage."

"I could do that within twenty-four hours; it is your consent I need."

"Well, then, I won't stand in your way."

Within twenty-four hours Kaba Gandhi was engaged.

For this his son, the Mahatma, with all his reverence for him, and perhaps on that very account, never forgave him. Referring to it in his autobiography, he wrote: "To a certain extent he might have been given to carnal pleasures for he married for the fourth time when he was over forty"—a rather hard judgment, perhaps, considering all the circumstances of the case.

The fourth wife was Putali Ba. She was from the village Datrana in Junagadh State. She bore the Mahatma. "When my father was to be married for the fourth time," Gandhiji once recalled, "there was some difficulty in finding him a suitable bride within his own caste." This might have been due to his advanced age but more than that it was due, perhaps, to the fact that the previous wife was still living. As a result, he was married into a family considered to be inferior in the hierarchy of caste.

By his fourth wife, Kaba Gandhi had three sons and a daughter. The eldest son Lakshmidas Gandhi, alias Kalidas Gandhi, became the

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treasurer in Porbandar State and afterwards settled down to practice as a petty pleader at Rajkot. The next child was a daughter—Raliat. Gandhiji's senior by seven years, she was unhappily married and was widowed not very long afterwards. She retained her orthodoxy till very late in life and for that reason she could not stay with her brother when he settled down in India. She renounced her orthodoxy, at least in theory, a few years before her brother's death and lived to the ripe old age of 90.

The third child was Karsandas. Two or three years older than Gandhiji, he studied with him in the High School. Mohandas was the fourth child, born on October 2, 1869, when Kaba Gandhi was forty-seven and Putali Ba twenty-five years of age. He was his mother's "Moniya". His father called him "Manu".

Kaba Gandhi's last days were anything but happy, owing to political as well as domestic worries. Ill health dogged him. He became bed-ridden. After six months, he tendered his resignation. The Thakore however did not accept it and himself took over his portfolio for the time being. At his bidding, Kaba Gandhi continued for a whole year to direct the affairs of the State from his sickbed. But when he found that in a dispute about land with his Bhayats (relatives), in which justice was on their side, the Thakore did not relish his advice, he finally resigned and retired. The Thakore granted him pension of Rs. 50 per month which he continued to draw till his death in 1886.

With Kaba Gandhi ended an era in which moral giants and unlettered geniuses could flourish and make their mark in Indian India. Gone were the days when an Ota Bapa or a Kaba Gandhi could, by his sheer native intelligence and force of character, scale the highest pinnacle of success in a petty Kathiawar State. The consolidation of British rule in princely Kathiawar was now as complete as in any other part of India. To keep the States as loyal supporters of the Crown and dependable "instruments of royal policy", the alien power needed men with minds conditioned by their English education to own no other or higher allegiance than what the constituted authority demanded of a loyal subject. It had no use for queer men with crazy "salute-with-the-left-hand" notions, or for men with an unrealistic "all-or-nothing" insistence on abstract justice in dealing even with a ruler. Such Quixotic idealism hereafter could have place only in the pages of romance. The last of the Gandhis who became Prime Minister, "Azam Otamchand Tulasidas for many years in the service of H.H. the Rana of Porbandar as Chief *Karbhari*", was removed from that post by F. S. P. Lely, Administrator of Porbandar, and retired on a pension of rupees fifty per month. His son, Amritlal Tulasidas, was advised by the same officer to pass the magisterial examination if he wished promotion: "High appointments are given in British territory only to those who have passed examination."[6] "If you will pass that I will give you Mamlatdar's place at an

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early opportunity."[7] Fancy an Ota Bapa or a Kaba Gandhi sitting for a magisterial examination!

The times had changed and different times brought different manners. The one who followed—Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi—had to look for "fresh woods and pastures new" to realise his full stature. His father became to him the symbol not only of the glory that was India before she was overrun by the foreigner, but also of the cultural subjection that British conquest had imposed. In later years, he often recalled how deeply it had hurt him as a child to see his father having to conform willy-nilly to the sartorial ritual prescribed at State functions. "Our household was turned upside down when my father had to attend the Durbar during a Governor's visit. He never wore stockings or boots . . . then called 'whole boots'. His general footwear was soft leather slippers. If I was a painter, I could paint my father's disgust and torture on his face as he was putting his legs into his stockings and feet into ill-fitting and uncomfortable boots. He had to do this."[8] The ending of cultural subjection became to Gandhiji the test of Independence.

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CHAPTER VIII

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

1

HALFWAY BETWEEN Dvarika and Diu—until recently a Portuguese settlement—the city and port of Porbandar, with its shoreline washed by the Arabian Sea, presents a lovely view. The principality, of which it was the capital, was a petty State in Kathiawar. In 1863 it was classified as a "first class" State. Before the integration of the Kathiawar States with the Indian Union it was ruled by a prince known as the Rana, who enjoyed unfettered power of life and death over his subjects, besides the privilege of an eleven-gun salute. Picturesquely set on a plain that slopes gently down from the foot of the distant, purplish Barda range, at one time it was surrounded by a wall, twenty feet thick and high in proportion. The houses were built of blocks of lime-stone quarried in the neighbourhood. Set without any mortar, the lime-stone was of such quality, that when once the rain had fallen on a wall thus built, all the joints coalesced, and if afterwards it became necessary to make an opening in the wall, the opening had to be sawn out as if it were a solid block. This, in course of time, gave to Porbandar the look of a rock-hewn city with houses carved out of blocks of cream-coloured marble. It came to be known as "The White City".

Inside the city wall were the palaces and the gardens of the Rana. There were hardly any trees to relieve the dull monotony of the old-style town, but the sacred *tulasi* (basil), used for daily worship, grew in almost every home either in a corner of the courtyard, or in flower-pots or in tubs. At dusk, the soft glow of earthen lamps, lighted for the evening service under each, glimmered through the tiny leaves, filling the whole place with a deep religious atmosphere associated with the Vaishnava faith. The city wall has now disappeared as also have many of the old familiar landmarks, and a modern town boasting wide streets and tall buildings in the latest style has arisen in place of the old. But behind a low embankment facing the sea, about a quarter mile inland, surrounded by murky, crowded bazaars and narrow lanes, can still be seen a bit of the old Porbandar, centring round the ancestral house of the Gandhi family.

In 1936, J. H. Hofmeyer, the South African Liberal leader, biographer and near kinsman of Jan Hofmeyer, the colleague of Cecil Rhodes in the South African Bond and afterwards his opponent, visited the ancestral house of the Gandhis at the invitation of the Rana of

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Porbandar and was deeply pained at the sight of dark, dingy surroundings of what he had expected to be preserved as India's proudest monument. He had come to India with a South African delegation on "a mission of goodwill and friendship". He travelled all over the country trying to win the affection of the people by his oratorical talent. At a Congress party function at Simla, paying a tribute to Gandhiji, he said: "Mahatma Gandhi was regarded in South Africa as a great world figure."[1] Reiterating at Porbandar what he had said about Gandhiji earlier he remarked: "You people seem to have poor appreciation of the greatness of this great man. In another country they would have thought nothing of spending millions to preserve the memory of such a . . . man. You little realise what India owes to him. His memory should be perpetuated by a memorial built to endure for eternity."

His words stung a merchant-prince of Porbandar, Sheth Nanji Kalidas, who had given away over a crore of rupees for various philanthropic objects, and whose munificence was exceeded only by his devotion to Gandhiji. By infinite perseverance he bought out, for a sum of nearly seventy-five thousand rupees, the claims of twenty-nine persons who had an interest in the Mahatma's ancestral house and some of the surrounding properties to be preserved as a national monument. He also built at his expense a costly memorial known as Mahatma Gandhi Kirti Mandir.

It is an impressive edifice crowned with a graceful spired pinnacle. The main entrance opens upon a spacious marble-paved courtyard. Surrounding it on all sides is a running verandah with marble floor and twenty-six marble pillars, bearing suitable inscriptions from Gandhiji's writings. The monument houses a modest collection of Gandhiji's works and relics and a miniature living museum of his various constructive activities.

Adjoining this building, and flanked on one side by the *Haveli* of Shrinathji—a Vaishnava temple dedicated to Lord Krishna—is the ancestral house of the Gandhis. The deed of sale and transfer shows that it was purchased in 1777 by Harjivan Gandhi, the great grand-father of the Mahatma, for a sum of five hundred Koris (about Rs. 165) from a woman belonging to a Brahmin family. The original deed of sale and transfer, which is in archaic Gujarati, is still in a fair state of preservation, and bears the signature of seven witnesses besides the seal and the Swastika mark of the Rana in lieu of his signature, since the Rana Saheb, in the grand old princely tradition of Kathiawar, was unlettered and could not write!

This house, much altered, now forms part of the Kirti Mandir. It is a massively built three-storeyed structure, erected on three sides of a small courtyard. The rooms are small, low-roofed, airless and dark. In the summer, they become oppressively hot and stuffy, so much so that the story goes that once a maid-servant, while preparing *dhupel*, a scented hair-oil, over a low fire, was overcome by the fumes and died.

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The only exception is the room on the top floor. Well-lighted and open to the sea breeze, it was used by Ota Bapa for his daily *puja* (worship). As the family grew, more rooms and fresh storeys were added to the existing ones. When the third storey had been reached it was found that the foundations could not sustain another stone-and-mortar structure and in the final storey wood was substituted.

On the ground floor of this building is a room 19½ feet long by 13 feet wide and 11 feet high. In its original condition it used to be so dark that even at midday one could not see without artificial light. Attached to this room on the left side is a kitchenette in which hardly two persons could comfortably sit. This is the room in which Putali Ba, Gandhiji's mother, passed her whole life. Communicating with this room, on the right hand as one enters it, is another apartment even smaller. Here Lakshmi Ma—the Mahatma's grandmother—lived with her sixth son Tulasidas. It was in the dark, stuffy room where Putali Ba lived that Gandhiji was born, while his grandmother was still alive.

Behind this mansion and a few houses removed from it, is another house, equally dark, equally airless and equally massively built. It is the house from which came Kasturba, little Mohan's would-be child-wife.

Underneath the verandah in front of the room in which the Mahatma was born, in the space enclosed by the three wings of the house, is an underground reservoir, 20 feet long, 20 feet wide and 15 feet deep, with a capacity of 20 thousand gallons, for storing rain water for domestic use. The well water in Porbandar, owing to its vicinity to the sea, is brackish, hard and unfit for cooking. Rainwater was, therefore, collected and stored in the underground reservoir for use the year round. The terrace on the top floor, carefully washed before the first monsoon showers, served as catchment for the water, running down a pipe straight into the tank. A heap of lime at the mouth of the pipe served to filter and purify the water.

In this house five generations of Gandhis lived, grew and prospered. Confined in murky, unhygienic surroundings they yet attained a ripe old age and developed a physique and character as sturdy and solid as the house they dwelt in. Like bees in a bee-hive they all shared equally the advantages and disadvantages of the Hindu life in the joint family. Each family had a separate apartment to live in and a separate kitchen. But on special occasions—festivals and ceremonies—they all ate together. Even the lying-in bed with its pillows and mattresses was used jointly by all the families. These were washed and disinfected after each delivery and stored away for whosoever might require them next. Money was scarce but the means of life were plentiful in the good old days, and the head of the family saw to it that all the normal requirements of everybody in the family were properly met.

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Kaba Gandhi's was a large household. The number of guests who sat down to eat with him was seldom below twenty. They included not only members of his family but also his guests, secretaries and officials, who together with the members of his own family constituted his "wider family". This became a hereditary trait in the case of his son—the Mahatma.

The keystone of this domestic edifice was Putali Ba. An ideal housewife, she was the first one to rise and the last to go to bed. She fed everybody first—the elders, the children and her in-laws—and ate only when she could manage it and from whatever was left after everybody had been served. In spite of it she was always cheerful and smiling. No one had ever heard her raise her voice. She never made any distinction between her own children and other children in the family. Her youngest son, the Mahatma, found in this trait of hers the key to the emancipation of womankind. He made the cultivation of this quality the foundation stone of the training of the women of his Ashram for Satyagraha and the goal of some of his boldest experiments in community living.

She was simple in her tastes, dressed plainly, and wore the customary Kathiawari sari and *Kamkho*—a narrow vest, open at the back that came only halfway down the stomach. She used very little jewellery—just the usual nose-ring on special occasions, old-style ivory bangles, four to five inches wide, plated with gold, only a thin red lacquered ivory edge showing at each end; and heavy silver anklets not unlike those worn in Taxila three thousand years ago. Being once shown a pair by the curator of the archaeological museum during a visit to that ancient site, Gandhiji with a deep sigh remarked: "Just like what my mother used to wear." Round her neck she wore a *kanthi* of *Tulasi* beads. She had a kindly countenance. The front teeth, rather prominent and broad, added to the sweetness of her smile.

Without education in the modern sense of the word, Putali Ba was a woman of remarkable intelligence and character. The Queen-mother, herself an adept in the affairs of the State, had great faith in her shrewd judgment and often used to send for her to Durbargadh for consultation and advice on important political problems. It was the practice those days for ladies, when they attended the Durbargadh, to go there decked out in their gaudiest clothes. But his mother, Gandhiji recalled, used even on those occasions to be dressed plainly as usual. Often she took him with her, and some of his vividest recollections in latter years were in connection with these visits and the talks that he heard.

Kaba Gandhi as the head of the family looked after the well-being of every member of his clan—getting them married, settling them in life, securing them jobs etc., besides helping Putali Ba in her household work. It was a familiar sight, which the people of Porbandar still remember, of him sitting in the Shrinathji temple day after day, peeling and paring the vegetables for his wife's kitchen, while he discussed with his visitors

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and officials affairs of the State. Visitors to Gandhiji's Ashram, who had the privilege of being invited by him to join him in peeling and cutting vegetables for the Ashram kitchen, when they went to have a talk with him, will here immediately be reminded of their own experience.

The joint family provides an ideal training ground for community living and in the science of human relationships. To run it is like managing a little kingdom with an unwritten constitution and no sanction save moral or that of love. Where so many people with diverse tastes, habits and temperaments are cooped up day and night in a narrow space, from week to week, month to month and year to year, it requires no little diplomatic skill, delicacy and tact, especially on the part of the head of the family, to maintain a healthy and sweet atmosphere. The members on their part have to develop the attitude of mutual help and regard, the capacity for give-and-take, and adjustment to one another's idiosyncrasies. A single tactless remark, a slip or an oversight, an uncouth habit, heedlessness or disregard of another's feelings may set people's nerves on edge and make life hell for the whole family. Competition in this narrow world is keen; even the youngsters feel the edge of it; little things assume big proportions; the slightest suggestion of unfairness or partiality gives rise to petty rivalries, jealousies and intrigues. To smooth them requires infinite patience, resourcefulness and knowledge of human nature.

Delicate and conscientious care in the minutiae of everyday life or its lack can make in the narrow confines of the joint family all the difference between peace and discontent, happiness and misery. The meticulous regard for detail and perfection in performance of the littlest of the little things—the two hinges on which joint family life turns—it would appear, Gandhiji inherited directly from his father. Similarly, the passion for ceaseless experimentation in community living as a part of his experiments with truth, the urge to live not only for mankind but in mankind and the time and care that he devoted in latter years to the trivia of Ashram life had their seed in the tradition of the joint family that surrounded his early childhood.

These alone might not have produced the Mahatma. But he would not have been the Mahatma we knew without the legacy of statesmanship, practical wisdom and lofty moral standards, running through six generations of his ancestors, that was bred into the bone; the institution of the Hindu joint family in which that statesmanship and wisdom were matured; and the religious tradition of India's ageless past which his worthy ancestors—particularly his saintly mother and pious grandmother—exemplified in their lives.

2

Kaba Gandhi was deeply attached to his children. Manu was his favourite. He had a cheerful, sweet face, slightly curly hair, a broad,

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radiant forehead, finely chiselled features and lovely eyes. Unlike other children he was not given to crying. He had a hearty ringing laughter, and everybody liked to fondle him.

Both the parents doted on their little son. But Kaba Gandhi was busy with his State duties and mother Putali Ba had scarcely any time from her household responsibilities to look after him. The burden of taking care of him, therefore, fell on other members of the family, particularly Putali Ba's in-laws.

One of the members of the family who used to be in charge of him was his sister Raliat or Gokibehn—more familiarly known as Phai Ba, i.e. auntie. She had often dandled Moniya. She vividly remembered his early childhood days, when I saw her some years ago at Rajkot. "Moniya could be said to have grown up on my lap," she recounted. "I used to carry him in my arms when I went out for a walk or for recreation. Mother used to be worried lest I should drop him or lose sight of him. Moniya was restless as mercury, could not sit still even for a little while. He must be either playing or roaming about. I used to take him out with me to show him the familiar sights in the street—cows, buffaloes and horses, cats and dogs. He was full of curiosity. At the first opportunity, he would go up to the animals and try to make friends with them. One of his favourite pastimes was twisting dog's ears."

On festivals, when there were crowds about, it was a job to keep Moniya from straying. Once his sister took him out with her during the *Molakat* festival. This is a festival that comes in the month of *Ashadha* (July-August). For four days preceding the full moon, young girls observe a vow of taking plain food without any salt. On the last day there is a carnival of feasting, dancing and singing, which continues far into the night. In celebration of the festival bevies of girls were going about gaily, with flowers in their hair, all over the town. Little Moniya eluded his sister's vigilance, followed one of the groups and was lost in the crowd. At dusk one of the girls brought him home. He could not eat and complained of a burning in the throat. Asked the reason, he said he had eaten some flowers which he had picked up from under a tree.

"What flowers?" the frightened mother asked.

"I do not know," Moniya answered.

A *vaidya* was immediately sent for. He administered an antidote and also applied a throat paint. His father thereafter gave strict instructions that Moniya was not to be left unaccompanied at any time, and engaged a maid-servant especially to look after him. This was Rambha, whom the Mahatma has immortalised in his autobiography. She remained with the Gandhi family till her death which occurred, according to a legend, as a result of asphyxiation. (See page 190).

Moniya was fond of playing out of doors, came home only when he felt hungry, and disappeared as soon as he had had some food. Nothing could curb his irrepressible energy. His father's presence had some

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restraining effect but, the moment Kaba's back was turned, he would begin turning everything in the house upside down. If he found his way into his father's *Puja Ghar* he would scatter all the utensils used in worship, remove the image of Thakorji from the stool and seat himself in its place. When he grew up a little, he scrawled across the floor and pretended he was "writing". He saw his elders writing so why should not he "write" also? His mother would tell him to desist, as it spoilt the floor. But he stoutly dissented, and went on "writing".

Some time he would go up to his mother and say: "Mother, I have today touched a *dhedh*" (an untouchable). On being questioned, he would laugh and say, "No, mother, I was only joking."

A difficult and self-willed child, Moniya insisted on having his way always. He was very fond of roaming in the temple adjoining their house. Rambha used to be sent to keep watch, lest he should come to harm climbing trees, or fall into the well in the temple. But Moniya very strongly objected to being followed. His father would tell him: "Rambha is not there to prevent you from roaming as you please, but only to see that you are not lost." But Moniya would go on objecting. Rambha had consequently to be told to keep an eye on him unobserved.

He was of a very peaceful disposition. No boy ever complained of Moniya having hit him. But sometimes he came home crying because some other boy had hit him. An affectionate word or a caress from father or mother would then make him stop crying and forget.

When the members of the family went to visit the temple, leaving him alone in the house, he had the time of his life. Failing everything else, he would climb a guava tree and slide down from its branches. Asked by the father about it, he had a ready explanation: "Father, I was only trying to put the ripening guavas in wraps to prevent the birds from pecking at them." Sometimes his elder brother would pull him down by the leg. He would then come to his mother crying and complain.

The mother would say: "Then give it back to him." With a pout Moniya would answer: "Mother, you wish to teach me to hit my elder brother? Why should I hit back?"

"When brothers and sisters quarrel with each other," the mother would argue, "they square it out among themselves. If your brother hits you, you can return the blow." In answer, Moniya would say: "Well, then let him hit me. I won't", and add as an afterthought: "Should you not, mother, prevent my brother from beating me, instead of asking me to imitate him?" Dumbfounded, the mother would hug her darling and exclaim: "Moniya, wherefrom has all this come to you? Who has taught you all this?" and she would wonder what destiny awaited her little one.

Moniya was fond of play, but he took his studies very seriously. Whatever he did was thoroughly done. When he had to do his lessons

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he would shut himself in his study and not admit anyone into it till he had finished. Unlike most boys he never shirked attendance at school. To avoid being late he would frequently miss his meal. "Just before school time," his sister recalled, "he would come running and ask if the meal was ready. We would tell him, 'The vegetables are nearly cooked, the *chapati* will be ready in no time, if you will only have a little patience.' But he would answer: 'If I wait . . . I shall be late at school and go down in the class.' He would ask me to give him some *dahi* (curds); have a hurried meal of *dahi*, *khakhras* (thin hard-baked dry *chapati*) and pickles and dash off to school. Only in the evening, when he returned home at five, would he have a regular meal."

He was very simple in his habits and tastes. The Dewan's house was well-stocked with all kinds of savouries and sweets but he was quite happy with his *dahi-khakhra*. Sweet-sour mango pickles he adored. After having a hearty breakfast on *dahi-khakhra* and pickles, he would often have little appetite left, and at mealtime he would excuse himself from eating, either because he did not feel hungry, or because it was school-time already, and he could not stop for a meal. His father felt worried. "This will never do," he would tell him. "One cannot do without regular hot meals; your health will suffer. If you go on like this, I am afraid, I shall have to regulate your breakfast. If necessary, our horse-and-carriage will take you to school so that you are not late." But Moniya would answer, "Where is the need, father? I shall walk", and pointing to his legs, add, "Here are my horse-and-carriage."

He never cared for fine clothes. His usual dress was *dhoti*, shirt and coat. These used to be of Ahmedabad mill cloth known as *Bandooq Chhap*—the Rifle Brand—much in vogue among the well-to-do folk those days.

He was an adept at hide-and-seek and *moi-dandiyo*. Sometimes he used to take part in cricket or some such games. There were some physical culture appliances at home. Occasionally, he took exercise with these or went out for a drive in his father's horse-carriage, but not often. His favourite exercise and recreation were long walks.

He sang sometimes, another witness recalled, and tried, not always successfully, to play on a mouth organ which his father had given him. But what he particularly liked was to listen to devotional songs. To listen to *Hari-Katha*—religious discourses—was his all-absorbing passion. If he learnt that any such recitation was going on in the neighbourhood, he would unfailingly attend it.

He was very fond of working with his hands. His special hobby was gardening. At Porbandar he laid a miniature hanging garden on the terrace of the house they lived in, by growing plants in flower pots. He never failed to water them morning and evening, though this involved running up and down two flights of stairs. Similarly, when he went to live in Rajkot with his father, he had a lovely kitchen garden in the courtyard

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of their house. In it he grew vegetables and fruit, guavas, papayas and pomegrenates, besides flowering plants. Even boys older than he acknowledged his superior skill and aptitude in gardening.

He was regular in his habits, rose at the crack of dawn, and promptly went out with other boys in the family to bathe at a well in an orchard nearby, where a leather water-lift was operating. While bathing at the well, the boys held contests in washing clothes. Moniya used to join in these contests. Invariably his clothes were the whitest, and he was very proud of it.

A favourite children's game those days used to be staging of mock Hindu festivals. Once his playmates decided to stage the *Jhoola* festival, when the images of gods and goddesses are placed in a swing and ceremoniously rocked to and fro. Usually children did this with clay images. But on this occasion, they decided to go one better. In the Lakshminarayan temple, they had heard, there were many bronze images of gods and goddesses. So, why not steal some and have real fun? A party accordingly set out for the purpose. Luck favoured them. The priest was having his siesta. The images were easily secured. But while they were being removed, one struck against another making a loud, clanging noise. The priest awoke. The band of little robbers took to their heels. The priest gave chase but was outpaced. The leader of the expedition threw the stolen images into the compound of another temple to get rid of the incriminating evidence, and with the rest of the boys ran into Ota Bapa's house for shelter. Most of the boys belonged to the Gandhi family. The priest complained to Moniya's uncle, who was a strict disciplinarian, besides being a staunch *Vaishnava*. Produced before him, they all gave the uniform reply in answer to his interrogation that they had just gone into the temple to play and the priest on groundless suspicion had chased them. As for the missing images they had no knowledge whatever as to who had removed them.

When Moniya's turn came, he told the whole truth, and named his cousin who had removed the images and alone could tell where he had thrown them when he, along with the rest, was pursued by the priest. The boys realised that Moniya was differently made and thereafter never invited him to join in their pranks.

A contemporary of Moniya, three years his junior, narrated to a grandnephew of his how he once slapped "Mohanbhai" when they were together at Porbandar. But the latter did not return the blow. "Instead he took me before his father and complained to him. Kaba Gandhi let me off with a frown and a reprimand." "For this," the narrator added, "Mohanbhai never bore me any grudge afterwards."

About a furlong from the house in which Moniya lived, there used to be a *chowk*, known as Shitala Chowk. On moonlit nights parties of Hindu and Muslim boys assembled there from different quarters of the city and played games for an hour or so after dinner. Moniya also used

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to go there but he had a temperamental dislike for boisterous games. He did not participate in them, but loved to officiate as umpire and saw to it that the rules of the game were strictly observed by those who engaged in them. If anyone played foul, he would politely but firmly put him out of the field. He had a reputation for strict impartiality and everybody respected his award. When disputes arose among the players, he invariably acted as the peacemaker. Never had he, he recalled in the evening of his life, made any distinction between Hindu, Muslim, Parsi and others. Neither at Porbandar nor subsequently at Rajkot did he remember a single occasion of a quarrel with a Muslim or a Parsi boy in the school. To compose differences among quarrelling parties had always been the passion of his life.

A couple of minutes' walk from Moniya's house there used to be a school known as *Dhooli Shala* or "dust school". It was so called because the pupils there were taught by their old-style teacher character-writing and reading by drawing the letters of the alphabet on a wooden board, on which fine dust was strewn. This was the school that Moniya attended.

"My mother always got me ready for the school in time," he once related, "and never allowed me to waste my time when I returned home. If I was idle, lazy or listless she at once pulled me up."

For the rest all he could afterwards recall of his school days at Porbandar was that it was with some difficulty that he got through the multiplication table. "The fact that I recollect nothing more of those days than having learnt in company with other boys to call our teacher all kinds of names, would strongly suggest that my intellect must have been sluggish, and my memory raw."

3

Moniya's second home was in Rajkot, where he went to live when his family migrated there. Lacking Porbandar's romantic setting, Rajkot was not without an old-world charm of its own. On its outskirts, at the end of a dirt road, with a cactus hedge running on either side, stretched an unspoilt vista of cultivated fields and contented villages. A seasonal stream ran on two sides of the town, and on the third the Aji river into which the other two streams, after effecting a union, emptied themselves. A furlong or so to the south-west of the city in the open space that separated it from the Civil Lines was a modest-looking dwelling of stone and brick. This was Kaba Gandhi's residence. Opposite this house, was the house of a Muslim boy who became young Mohandas Gandhi's pal, hero and evil genius, Sheikh Mehtab. Not many houses removed from it in the same lane, was the house of a Somali negro with crinkly hair, yellow eyes, and white teeth—a symbol and portent of the events to come in young Mohandas's life. He spoke

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Gujarati fluently and practised as an *Ayurvedic* physician. He was known as *Chaoos*—an appellation for Muslim foreigners in Kathiawar.

Adjoining the main gate of this building on the right hand, as one enters it, was a sitting room where Kaba Gandhi used to receive visitors and friends. Above the main gate was a small room, even more modest-looking than the rest of the building. It was, however, the airiest. This was Mohan's study.

Gandhiji in his autobiography has written that he came over from Porbandar to live in Rajkot when his father became a member of the Rajasthanic Court. "I must have been . . . about seven," he adds, "when my father left." This seems to be a slip of memory. For when Kaba Gandhi was appointed member of the Rajasthanic Court, Gandhiji was not seven years of age but a month short of four. Further on he says that at Rajkot he was put in a primary school. From this school he went to the suburban school and thence to the Alfred High School. The record of the suburban school shows that he was admitted there on January 21, 1879, and in the High School two years later. All this would strongly point to the conclusion that he must have come to Rajkot some time towards the close of 1876 or the beginning of 1877—not when his father became a member of the Rajasthanic court, but after he was appointed Prime Minister of Rajkot State with full powers.

Whether at home or at school, Mohan lived in a world of his own. A conscientious and diligent student, he was in his class on the stroke of the hour and ran back home as soon as the school was over. "There used to be a half hour recess at midday. Even during my recess I used to run home." His school career was undistinguished. "I read nothing outside my school books. Even story books had no attraction for me." School books he read as an inescapable necessity as he did not wish to have to say to his teachers in the class that he had not done his lesson "and to tell a lie was out of the question". The result was what might be expected. One of his terminal reports described him as being good at English, fair in Arithmetic, and weak in Geography; conduct very good, handwriting poor—a trait which, to his great chagrin in later life, became permanent.

Chance reading of *Shravana Pitribhakti Nataka*, which he found among his father's books, while he was in the Primary School, and seeing a play enacted by a dramatic company, depicting the story of Harishchandra, had a profound effect upon him. Not less moving were the pictures of Shravana, carrying his aged, blind parents in a sling, depending from his shoulders that were exhibited by a company of itinerant showmen with a box stereoscope about the same time. To these not long afterwards was added the *Ramayana*. All the three exalted the ideals of filial devotion, the sanctity of the pledged word and performance of one's duty even at the cost of all that the world holds dear. He found in them examples worthy of his emulation. "I literally believed in the story of

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Harishchandra. The thought of it all often made me weep. My commonsense tells me today that Harishchandra could not have been a historical character. Still both Harishchandra and Shravana are living realities for me, and I am sure I should be moved as before if I were to read those plays again today."[2]

This attitude in regard to the historicity of the characters embodying his ideals, he later carried to Jesus Christ. It enabled him to remain unaffected by all those controversies about the historicity of Jesus that convulsed the Christian world and wracked the soul of many a sincere believing Christian in the nineteenth century. "Such I hold to be Jesus's example. . . . One such act of perfect sacrifice would suffice for the whole world. . . . Whether the Jesus tradition is historically true or not I do not care. To me it is truer than history because I hold it to be possible and it enshrines an eternal law."[3]

A little incident while he was in the Middle School presaged the coming man. Mr Giles, the Inspector, visited the school. The test he gave to the pupils was to write to dictation five simple English words. One of them was "kettle". The teacher accompanying the Inspector noticed that little Mohandas had misspelt it. Repeatedly he tried to prompt him to copy the correct spelling from the boy next to him. Mohandas was too "stupid" to take the hint. He was found to be the only lad in the class unable to spell it correctly.

In one of Anatole France's short stories, a young friar becomes Satan's despair—because "God's fool" is too "stupid" to follow the sophistries of the Dark One when the latter tries to tempt him into sin. In Indian sacred lore there is an even apter parallel. Jada Bharat or "Bharat the Stupid" owed his invulnerability to his "divine ignorance". Mohan was too stupid to understand the value of a lie. This "stupidity" brought him sometimes bitter vexation later in life. But he lived to thank God for having endowed him with it. On more than one occasion it became his protecting shield when he was beleagured by temptation and his inner defences had all but crumbled.

"Mediocre" is the epithet that Gandhiji applied to his career as a student and the same has been repeated by others. In a sense this is true. One, however, has a suspicion that repeated references on his part to his "mediocrity" was something of an affectation—perhaps unconscious —indicative of the small importance that he attached to mere academic attainments. He had a clear head, a strong memory in regard to the things he cared for, a vigorous intellect and a flair for originality. On the other hand, he had a moral repugnance for "window dressing", "mugging" up and the usual tricks that come handy for putting up a good show in an examination. In spite of it, he occasionally won prizes, and in the fifth and the sixth standard he was awarded scholarships of rupees four and ten respectively. His school studies did not make a scholar of him. Nor was that his ambition. Learning unrelated to life and its duties had

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little attraction for him. His genius lay in a different direction. A couple of days before he met his end, in a heart-to-heart conversation with an American visitor, he expressed his conviction that too much was being made of the study of things that are really of not much consequence to humanity to the neglect of things eternal. For instance, it mattered little, he said, whether one knew the exact distance of the sun from the earth or whether the earth is round. "The discipline that is necessary to discover the laws that govern life is no less important and yet we say that it is so laborious that only a numbered few can attain it. . . . I have given my time not to abstract studies but to the practice of things that matter."[4]

Reading he valued chiefly as a guide to life and as an aid to practice. What could not be practised did not interest him. He, therefore, turned to the Book of Life. His father's and mother's example pointed to him the way. Their affection made striving for right practice not only cease to be irksome but a source of perennial joy. Their service became his real school of studies; their life his most treasured book. Here is his own account of it as he recalled it when he was nearing his journey's end: "I was my mother's pet child, first because I was the smallest of her children, but also because there was nothing dearer to my heart than her service. My brothers were fond of play and frolic. I found not much in common with them. I had no close bond with my sister either. Play had absolutely no fascination for me in preference to my mother's service. Whenever she wanted me for anything, I ran to her.

"My mother was deeply religious. Fasting and austerity were an integral part of her life. She was a woman of simple faith. She never missed going to the temple. She recited only one *Mantra*, श्री कृष्णः शरणं मम। (Lord Krishna is my only refuge). The *Gita* etc. she could not read.

"She observed long fasts, sometimes for two or three days on end. During the four months of the rainy season, *Chaturmas*, she sometimes ate only once a day. During another *Chaturmas*, she would eat only on alternate days. Once she vowed to take her food only after seeing the sun. But the sun-god is fickle in the rainy season. Sometimes the children would rush to her to announce the appearance of the sun. But by the time she came out, he would hide himself behind the clouds. She would then take it as an indication that God did not wish her to eat on that day and cheerfully returned to her daily round of duties."

He did not believe in all her orthodox practices. When, according to the conservative Hindu tradition, cooking was suspended in her kitchen during a lunar or a solar eclipse, he insisted on being given something to eat, and the mother, out of her overflowing affection, would find a way out of the orthodox taboo and provide him food. He sometimes observed the *Ekadashi* with her, when food is restricted to milk, fruit and root vegetables to the exclusion of pulses, cereals, etc. He did this, however, not for religious merit, but "because on that day there used

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to be prepared special and more delicious dishes"! Though he had no faith in all the orthodox practices of his mother, he had the completest faith in her and her utter sincerity. And that in course of time bore rich fruit.

Explaining to one of his audiences in England, when he was in his middle sixties, the origin and basis of the self-denial particularly in regard to his eating habits that characterised him in later life, he observed: "Our mother used to pray and fast for us, her children. It was her love for us that made her fast. So I said to myself, if a mother's love for us could evoke in her that self-denial, how much greater self-denial should God's love command, which is infinitely greater."

Next to his mother, his being centred on his father. The Reverend Joseph Doke, the South African missionary, who came into a more intimate touch with him spiritually than any other Englishman when Gandhiji's spirit was at the peak of its incandescence, wrote: "When Mr. Gandhi speaks of his parents, those who listen realise that they are on holy ground."[5] There was, however, this difference. He revered his father but his mother he adored. He stood in awe of his father: "I did not talk with him much. I was afraid to speak." But fear was out of the question in the case of mother. Of his father, he was sometimes critical in later life; but of his mother never. His father was to him the embodiment of uprightness; his mother of piety. He was stainless, but she was saintly. His father was the model that he was to follow in his career in life. Worthily to fill his place in the family as the head, in society and in his part of the country, became the goal of his ambition. But his mother became the core of his inner being. Her affection forged bonds that continued to protect and influence him even when physically she was far away and had even ceased to be.

The father, on his part, had no less faith in his son than the son had in his father. All the three sons had come to him late in life. He often worried about their future and more particularly their mother's. Being once asked during his last days as to who would take his place after him, Kaba Gandhi said: "Manu will be the pride of our family; he will bring lustre to my name."

Referring to the part that dedicated service of his parents had played in his development, Gandhiji once remarked that whatever worthwhile he had been able to achieve in life was owing to his devoted service of father and mother. "Not only do I owe to it the ceaseless growth of my moral and spiritual faculties; it laid the foundation of my intellectual growth also." Not book-reading, but dedicated service alone, he later affirmed, can provide the basis of true education. "Let anyone who wishes try it for himself and he will find that it holds the key to one's all-round progress."[6]

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4

When Mohan was in his thirteenth year he was married to a girl of about the same age. He had been engaged to her by his parents, in accordance with the old-time orthodox practice without his knowledge, when she was only seven years old. She was Kasturbai, the daughter of a rich merchant of Porbandar, Gokaldas Makanji. This was his third engagement, the first two girls to whom he was engaged having died. It was said that he and Kasturbai had known each other and had even played together when they were little children. This is quite possible as their respective houses were not very far from each other and his mother used often to visit his bride-to-be's house with Moniya in her company. Mohan, it is said, was not keen on getting married at such a tender age. But Kaba Gandhi was getting old. To Moniya's objections he replied: "When you grow up and have children of your own you will be free to do as you please. But I belong to the old generation. I wish to witness the auspicious occasion of my son's marriage before I depart." Willy-nilly Mohan had to agree.

The date for the marriage was accordingly fixed. The marriage was to be performed at Porbandar. But the father could not obtain leave, being a State official, and when he did get leave there was not enough time to reach Porbandar in time for the wedding. Normally it took five days to accomplish by bullock-cart the 120 mile journey between Rajkot and Porbandar. Kaba Gandhi by employing relays of carriages managed to cover it in three. In the final stage his carriage overturned and he arrived bandaged all over, with severe injuries from which he never recovered.

It was to be a triple wedding celebration, as it had been decided, mainly on grounds of economy, to perform the marriage ceremony of Mohan's brother Karsandas and a nephew also at the same time. The accident to Kaba Gandhi damped the joy of the occasion somewhat but otherwise made no difference as Kaba Gandhi with that stern, unbending resolution, which was his characteristic, fulfilled his duties as if nothing had happened and everything went according to plan.

A wedding in those days was, as it is now, an occasion for great pomp. The bridegroom, decked in fine clothes and fripperies, was made to mount a horse specially decorated for the occasion and taken to the prospective bride's house in procession. But Moniya, his sister recalled, had a hearty dislike for all that. He had to submit to some of these things for the sake of ceremony. "But when they asked him to put on a gold necklace he absolutely refused and they had to give in."

In after years the Mahatma referred to his early marriage as a tragedy. "Two innocent children unwillingly hurled themselves into the ocean of life," he has poignantly recorded in his autobiography. But that day everything seemed to him right and proper. His brother's wife had thoroughly coached him about his behaviour on the first night. "I

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do not know who had coached my wife. . .we were too nervous to face each other. . . . The coaching could not carry me far. But no coaching is really necessary in such matters. The impressions of former births are potent enough to make all coaching superfluous." And so the marriage ceremony marked the beginning of their married life as well.

He had imbibed the ideal of conjugal fidelity from a *A Practical Guide* sort of a Gujarati pamphlet, costing about a farthing. His ambition was to become an ideal husband, and to make his wife into an ideal wife. A faithful husband himself he would *make* her lead a life of perfect innocence and purity. The first was all right. The second landed him into difficulties. He became more and more demanding and imperious, and ended by becoming a jealous husband suspicious of his wife, when she had given no cause for suspicion. He shadowed her, tried to restrain her movements, and forbade her from going anywhere without obtaining his permission. She was a simple, innocent child of God. It seemed to her incomprehensible that anybody in his senses could take exception to her going to the temple, when she felt like it, or visiting her parents or her friends. She refused to submit to his restrictions, and insisted on doing just as she pleased. When he pompously sermonised her on her wifely duties she, by just one simple, devastating home-truth, for which she had a genius, made him feel absurd. When he was angry she looked into his face with innocent surprise. That exasperated him still further. He became still more angry and crossed the bounds of reason. Tears would then well up in her eyes and he would feel ashamed.

During the day they could scarcely meet, much less talk with each other. It was considered to be immodest, according to orthodox notions, for the newly weds to speak with each other in the presence of elders. But at night, after the day's duties were over, Mohan's study provided a cosy retreat for their conjugal tete-a-tete. Very often it ended in a quarrel. There were scenes. They would then not speak with each other for days. In physical courage she was his superior. She had a will of her own. To her homely sense of right and wrong, she joined a capacity undeviatingly to act up to it, that was perhaps greater than his in respect of his own standards. Do what he might, he could not bend her to his will.

He tried to teach her. In his capacity as a teacher at least she would recognise his authority. But there again he had reckoned without his host. She did not feel interested in studies. Moreover, alas, "lustful love left me not much time. . . . I was passionately fond of her. Even at school, I used to think of her and the thought of nightfall and our subsequent meeting was ever haunting me. Separation was unbearable. If with this devouring passion, there had not been in me a burning sense of duty, I should either have fallen a prey to disease and premature death or have sunk into a burdensome existence. But the appointed tasks had to be gone through every morning, and lying to any one was out of the question." This last, coupled with her frequent absences to her parents'

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home, became his saving. In all, they hardly lived for three years together during his student days in India.

So the years rolled by. When at last he woke up from his "sleep of lust", he had already been sucked into the vortex of public life, which claimed every moment of his time. The result was that Kasturbai remained "illiterate" in spite of his anxiety to teach her. But no pure-hearted striving is ever wasted. In course of time, "lust" matured into love, and their respective roles were reversed. She became his "teacher in Satyagraha" much more successfully than he had been as a husband-teacher. The conclusion forced itself upon him that love and lust go ill together. Love begins where lust ends. He who would serve womankind must free himself from carnal passions first.

The unique partnership lasted for sixty-two years. "She was a woman always of a very strong will," Gandhiji recalled after her death in a letter to Lord Wavell, "which in our early days I used to mistake for obstinacy. But that strong will enabled her to become, quite unwittingly, my teacher in the art and practice of non-violent non-cooperation."[7]

In course of time even her "illiteracy" ceased to matter. It only added a touch of distinctiveness to her greatness. When a trust was to be established as a memorial to her, to train women workers for social service, he insisted that the workers must represent "Kasturba's outlook on life". Being asked to explain, he said it meant: "The outlook represented by Kasturba Gandhi, not Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi."

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CHAPTER IX

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE

1

It was with difficulty that Kaba Gandhi was able to return to Rajkot after Mohan's marriage. The injuries that he had sustained invalided him for life. His prolonged illness, however, did not make him irritable or affect his equanimity. Mohan nursed him throughout his illness with a rare devotion. Father, too, had unbounded confidence in his son and unhesitatingly called for his Manu whenever he needed help. Manu on his part never once failed promptly to respond to his call. Early in the morning he would bring his father a wash-basin and water for his ablutions, help him to the lavatory, wash his feet, bathe him, physic him and only then would he address himself to his studies. At night he would affectionately massage his legs and leave him only when he was ordered, or when his father fell asleep. No less unwearied in her husband's service was his mother.

This meant neglect of his studies. But he did not mind. "My own recollection is," he writes, "that I had not any high regard for my ability. I used to be astonished whenever I won prizes and scholarships. But I very jealously guarded my character. The least little blemish drew tears from my eyes. When I merited, or seemed to the teacher to merit, a rebuke, it was unbearable for me."[1]

By cruel irony, his very anxiety to keep himself free from blemish brought upon him an unmerited stigma. When he was in the seventh standard, the headmaster, a Parsi, made gymnastics and cricket compulsory for the students. Mohan disliked both, firstly because he was shy and shunned the company of other boys, and secondly because he preferred to be by his father's sickbed. He, therefore, begged to be exempted, only to be refused. The following Saturday, the school was held in the morning. The afternoon was cloudy. He lost reckoning of time. By the time he arrived at the playground, the games were over and he was marked absent. Called upon to explain the next day, he stated the facts but his headmaster disbelieved his statement and fined him. The fine was a trifling one—of one or two annas only. But the anguish of being supposed to have told a lie ate into him. He wept bitterly, and told his father the whole story. The father wrote to the headmaster that he needed his son's presence after school hours and secured for him exemption from attendance in the games. The fine also was remitted. The incident left

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a deep impression on young Mohan's mind. He converted it into another milestone in his progress. "I saw that a man of truth must also be a man of care. This was the first and last instance of my carelessness in school."[2]

Mohan was now fifteen. His marriage had made him lose a school year. By dint of hard work, he secured double promotion. He had as a result to work harder than ever. Substitution of English for the mother tongue as the medium for most subjects in the fourth standard added to his difficulty. Geometry baffled him till he reached the thirteenth proposition of Euclid, when he suddenly grasped its rationale, "and the utter simplicity of the subject was revealed to me". Sanskrit required "cramming". This he detested. So he changed over to Persian. Krishnashankar Hirashankar Pandya, his Sanskrit teacher, however, pleaded with him not "to desert the language of his religion". His kindness shamed Mohan into repentance, and he lived to thank his teacher for it. Direct access to the rich treasure-house of spiritual knowledge, when he was tossed about by doubt and scepticism, became his sheet anchor.

From his early childhood Mohan was a very serious-minded lad. There occurs in one of his letters to his second son Manilal, a sentence that is frightening in its portentous seriousness. The letter is dated March 2, 1909. He was then forty and his son seventeen. He was trying to emphasise on the latter the value of developing a seriousness of outlook in life even from childhood and of serving his mother with all his heart and soul as the most important part of his education. The letter runs:

> A remark in Nathuram Sharma's *Introduction to the Upanishads* has left a very deep impression on my mind. It is to the effect that the first stage in man's life, i.e., the brahmacharya stage is like the last, i.e., the *sannyasa* stage. Fun and frolic are permissible only during one's years of innocence, i.e., up to the twelfth year. As soon as a child attains the age of discretion, he must learn to go about with a full sense of his responsibility and make a ceaseless, conscious effort to develop his character. . . . I remember when I was less than your age, my greatest joy was to nurse my father. *I have not known what fun and frolic are since my twelfth year* (Italics mine).

Even some of the lapses of his early childhood were rooted in this trait of his. It led him, when he was about seven, into smoking and as its concomitant stealing of coppers from the servant's pockets. His uncle smoked. So he thought that to be able to blow rings of smoke or expel it through one's nostrils like a grown up man must be an accomplishment worthy of his emulation. In company with a "relative", he learned to smoke. To procure cigarettes money was needed. Recourse was, therefore, taken to stealing. But pilfering went against the grain. So they tried to make do with thrown-away cigarette stubs which they picked up. This was galling to their adolescent self-respect.

The porous stem of a weed was tried next. They could puff at it all right. But this seemed to be a poor substitute. This lack of independence

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was intolerable. Even death was preferable to it. They decided to commit suicide, made a suicide pact, sealed it by a visit to Kedarji Mandir, lighted a light to the deity to bless their enterprise and proceeded to a lonely spot with the seeds of the poisonous *dhatura* (belladonna) in their pocket. They swallowed a few seeds each. But then their courage deserted them. Surely, the lack of independence could be put up with for a little while longer, they thought, till they were grown up and had means of their own. They would then smoke and smoke openly! The thought of suicide was given up and they decided instead to go to Ramji Mandir "to compose ourselves".[3]

Later in life, Gandhiji developed a strong repugnance to smoking, not only because it is a "dirty" habit, but because of its subtle stupefying effect on reason that leads to errors of judgment which would otherwise be unthinkable. As an illustration, he used to mention the instance of the hero in Tolstoy's *Kreutzer Sonata*, who, in a fit of jealous rage, decides to commit murder but cannot bring himself to do it. He then settles down in a chair and begins to smoke a cigarette which numbs his finer feeling and the deed is done.

2

In the High School Mohandas formed intimate friendship with two of his fellows. One of these happened to be a Lohana lad, "the younger brother of one of our school teachers". The other was a Muslim boy—Sheikh Mehtab. The first boy faded out of his life, when the other entered it. Friendship with the other became the tragedy of his life. There were a number of big boys in the school who were dreaded as bad company by all decent boys. Mohan was always afraid of them. He needed someone to shield him from their harassment. Besides, with his natural sense of chivalry, which ever urged him to champion the weak against the strong, he wished to be able to afford the same protection to the weaker boys also.

Mehtab seemed to Mohan to embody all that which he himself lacked and aspired to be. He was strong and athletic, with an impressive physique that could take any amount of corporal punishment. Mohan was small and frail. He was afraid of thieves, ghosts and snakes; he could not go to bed without a light. The lamp had consequently to be kept burning in his room all night long. "I would imagine ghosts coming from one direction, thieves from another and serpents from a third."[4] In contrast, his friend feared neither God nor Devil. He boasted that "he could hold in his hand live serpents, could defy thieves and did not believe in ghosts."[5] Bullies had no terror for him. He could go one better than any. Once he gave their pals a tea-party in Mohan's behalf. At the end as usual betel leaves were served. But instead of the red catechu, he introduced into them some other stuff which blackened the lips and teeth of those who

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had chewed them. Just then, Mohan's elder brother, Kalidas, happened to arrive on the scene. Finding the assemblage in that state he was shocked. Thinking that the inspiration came from Mohan, he exclaimed: "I never thought, Moniya, you were capable of this!"

Mohan's parents did not approve of this friendship. Nor did his wife. They knew that Mehtab had many vices. They warned Mohan of the danger. But constancy was an outstanding trait of Mohan's character. He brushed aside their warnings. He was not unaware of his friend's shortcomings, he reassured them, but he was confident he would be able to reform him. They should, therefore, not worry on his account. They took him at his word and ceased to remonstrate with him.

Kathiawar had not been able to escape altogether the corroding effect of Western education. It was passing through "a wave of reform" such as Bengal had passed through before. One of its manifestations was a crusade against the taboos of orthodox Hinduism, especially in regard to eating of meat.

Owing to the influence of the Jaina religion, perhaps, nowhere in India is meat-eating regarded with such horror as among the Vaishnavas of Gujarat. But under the impact of "reform", a number of youths in Rajkot had taken to meat-eating and bibbing liquor—a few openly, others covertly. Among meat-eaters were some school teachers, as well as Mohan's second brother Karsandas. Mehtab was at Mohan to take to this "reform". "Just look at me," he would say, "observe my physical prowess and dare-devilry." These qualities Mohan admired. The inference was obvious—a thesis for meat-eating.

Mohan hesitated. His heart-strings did not respond to the tune set. His friend, however, was not to be baffled. He knew all the keys. India's subjection rankled in every Indian breast. There was hardly a man or a child in India who had not at one time or other shared the dream of driving out the English and restoring to his country its lost independence. Mohan was no exception to it. His friend began to play upon that sentiment. Why was the Englishman able to rule over India? Because he was a meat-eater. Had not Narmad, the Gujarati poet, in doggerel praised the "mighty Englishman" who "ruled over the Indian small", because being a meat-eater, he was "five cubits tall?"

The argument went home. "It began to grow on me that meat-eating was good, that it would make me strong and daring, and that, if the whole country took to meat-eating, the English could be overcome."[6] His friend procured the meat and had it cooked. They met in a lonely place by the riverside and Mohan for the first time tasted meat.

He did not relish it. "The goat's meat was as tough as leather.... I was sick and had to leave off eating." At night he was haunted by nightmares. "Every time I dropped off to sleep, it would seem as though a live goat were bleating inside me, and I would jump up full of remorse." But he endured it all for the sake of "reform". He wished to be strong

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and daring and wanted his countrymen also to be such, so that "we might defeat the English and make India free".[7]

All this, of course, had to be hidden from his parents. If they came to know of it, they would be shocked to death. But meat-eating for the sake of the country's freedom was a "duty". "I persuaded myself that mere hiding the deed from parents was no departure from truth."[8]

In course of time the initial repugnance to meat-eating wore off and he even began to relish the meat dishes. But another difficulty cropped up. Every time he indulged in meat-eating, he had no appetite left, and at mealtime he had to invent excuses to explain it to his mother. His trusting mother took him at his word. The deception and lying to her filled him with disgust. He could not endure it. At the same time such a vital experiment in "reform" could not be given up altogether. So he decided that during the parents' lifetime he would not eat meat. When they were no more and he had found his freedom, he would eat meat openly. The experiment was, accordingly, discontinued and it was never resumed. During about a year's time that it lasted, he must not have indulged in eating of meat for more than half a dozen times. He never told his parents. He dared not, and they remained in blissful ignorance of it to their dying day.

The insidious influence of his friend continued in various other ways. He fanned the flame of suspicion in Mohan's mind, and this accentuated the dissensions between him and his wife. Ultimately he took him to a brothel. Everything had been carefully planned and pre-arranged. The fee had been paid. "But God in His infinite mercy protected me against myself. I was almost struck blind and dumb in this den of vice. I sat near the woman on her bed, but I was tongue-tied." The woman lost patience and pushed him into the street to the accompaniment of some of her choicest epithets. "I then felt as though my manhood had been injured, and wished to sink into the ground for shame."[9]

Though he was thus saved from the worst, he did not, he felt, come out of the muck-hole altogether unstained. "For, the carnal desire was there, and it was as good as the act." On a previous occasion it was his devotion to his parents and the pain it caused him in having to lie to them that had come to his rescue. This time it was his innate "stupidity" that became his shield. The lesson that was burnt in upon him was that a man, who relies upon his own prowess for being saved, deceives himself. Intellect and will can take one only to a certain length but in the final test they fail us. Then it is God's grace alone that saves. "As we know that a man often succumbs to temptation, however much he may resist it, we also know that Providence often intercedes and saves him in spite of himself. How all this happens—how far a man is free and how far a creature of circumstances—how far free-will comes into play and where fate enters on the scene—all this is a mystery and will remain a mystery."[10]

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Even this did not wean him from his friendship with Mehtab. When later he went to England for study, he sent him money even from there out of his meagre allowance. Still later, this friend followed him to South Africa. It was only after another long chapter of heart-breaks that his eyes were opened to the seamy side of his evil associate.

In the meantime, the seeds of suspicion that his chum had planted in Mohan's heart, sprouted. They poisoned his relationship with his wife. In this she had given not the slightest cause. He never forgave himself for the pain he time and again caused her by allowing himself to be carried away by his unwarranted jealousy. The poison, as he has written in his Autobiography, was finally eradicated only "when I understood Ahimsa in all its bearings. I saw then the glory of Brahmacharya and realised that the wife is not the husband's bondslave, but his companion and his helpmate, and an equal partner in all his joys and sorrows—as free as the husband to choose her own path."[11]

The experiment in friendship had a deep significance for Mohandas. Thoreau has somewhere remarked that friendship is a relation of perfect equality. "Not that the parties to it are in all respects equal, but they are equal in all that respects or affects their friendship .... Persons are only the vessels which contain the nectar, and the hydrostatic paradox is the symbol of love's law. It finds its level and rises to its fountain-head in all breasts."[12] And again: "A base friendship is of a narrowing and exclusive tendency, but a noble one is not exclusive; its very superfluity and dispersed love is the humanity which sweetens society."[13] Mohan thought that by giving the best of himself to his friend, he would be able to "reform" him, without being affected himself by his company. Too late he realised that cultivation of intimacy for the sake of reforms is a contradiction in terms. Friendship, by its very nature, is an affair of "give-and-take". And since man is prone more readily to be affected by vice than by virtue, "only between like natures can friendship be altogether worthy and enduring." "True friendship is an identity of souls rarely to be found in this world." All "exclusive intimacies" should, therefore, be avoided. "He who would be friends with God must remain alone, or make the whole world his friend."[14]

3

Secret experiments in meat-eating had resulted in Mohan's elder brother running into a small debt. The debt had to be paid. Money had to be found for it. Mohan's brother wore a gold armlet. After prolonged conferences, they decided to clip a piece of gold from it. This was accordingly done, and the debt cleared. Mohan became a party to the stealing.

When at night the brother returned home, both father and mother noticed the missing crown of the armlet. They asked him what had

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happened to it. He did not know. They asked Mohan. He also denied having any knowledge of it.

Both the parents had complete confidence in him. They believed what he said and the matter was dropped.

According to his sister, Mohan then went into his study and got busy with his lessons. But his mind was troubled. He felt fidgety. After about an hour or so he got up, came to his mother and confessed everything.

"Go and tell your father," she said full of concern.

"Would father thrash me for this?" he asked.

"He won't. Why should he? Has he ever done so? Go and tell him. Or, if you prefer, I shall. I shall also ask him not to punish you."

"No, mother, mine is the fault. So it is best that I should face him myself, and take the consequences."

With this, he left his mother, scribbled his confession on a piece of paper and in fear and trembling placed it in his father's hands. His fear was not for himself but the effect it might have upon his father. In this note he not only confessed his guilt, but he asked for adequate punishment and closed with a request to him not to punish himself for his offence. "I also pledged myself never to steal in future."

One of the sentences in the confession ran: "So, father, your son is now in your eyes no better than a common thief?" His father read it through. "Pearl-drops trickled down his cheeks, wetting the paper. For a moment he closed his eyes in thought and then tore up the note. He had sat up to read it. He again lay down. I also cried. I could see my father's agony. . . . Those pearl-drops of love cleansed my heart, and washed my sin away. . . .

"This sort of sublime forgiveness was not natural to my father. I had thought that he would be angry, say hard things, and strike his forehead. But he was so wonderfully peaceful, and I believe this was due to my clean confession."[15]

In a fragment which anticipated his *My Experiments with Truth*, referring to this incident, he wrote: "From that day, truth-telling became a passion with me." Besides the cleansing power of a confession from a contrite heart, the experience revealed to him the power of Ahimsa which punishes, purifies and compels as nothing else. "Then I could read in it nothing more than a father's love, but today I know that it was pure Ahimsa. When such Ahimsa becomes all-embracing, it transforms everything it touches. There is no limit to its power."[16]

* * *

Two years after this, in the year 1886, Mohan was in the sixth standard. He was aged seventeen. In spite of all the care and medical attention, his father's condition had grown from bad to worse. He was suffering from fistula. An English surgeon recommended a surgical

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operation. But the family physician came in the way. Relations also were afraid. The idea of the operation was abandoned. He began to sink fast.

On the last night he was pressing his father's legs. At about half past ten or eleven p.m., his uncle relieved him. He, on getting news of Kaba Gandhi's worsening condition, had rushed to Rajkot. The two brothers were very deeply attached to each other. As soon as Mohan was relieved he, as usual, ran straight into his bedroom. His wife was in an advanced stage of pregnancy. "Poor thing, she was fast asleep. I woke her up. In five or six minutes' time, the servant knocked at the door. I started with alarm. 'Get up,' he said, 'Father is very ill'.... I sprang out of my bed.

" 'What is the matter? Do tell me.'

" 'Father is no more.' "

Soon after Mohan had left his father's bedside, his father's condition, he learnt, had suddenly taken a critical turn. He must have had a foreboding of the coming end. "He had made a sign for pen and paper and written: 'Prepare for the last rites.' He had then snapped the amulet off his arm and also his gold necklace of *Tulasi* beads and flung them aside. A moment after this he was no more."[17]

Mohan reproached himself bitterly. He was dedicated heart and soul to his parents. If he had not been slave to his lust, the privilege of serving his father in his last moments might have been his. But "every night whilst my hands were busy massaging my father's legs, my mind was hovering about the bedroom,—and that too at a time when religion, medical science and commonsense alike forbade sexual intercourse."[18] His devotion to his parents had been weighed in the balance and found wanting. The memory of it rankled like a thorn in his heart. To overcome "lust" became the biggest battle of his life and he had to pass through many a fiery ordeal in the course of it. The child that was born to his wife did not live for more than a few days. "Nothing else could be expected. Let all those who are married be warned by my example."[19]

In later years, Gandhiji often used to say, "Non-violence came to me after a strenuous struggle. Brahmacharya I am still struggling for. But truth has always come natural to me. It caused me a deep wrench every time I departed from it."

Full practice of truth, as he saw it, became to him the whole meaning of life. Even the battle for Brahmacharya became a part of that striving. It led him into many a hazardous experiment and to regard no sacrifice as being too heavy for its sake. In the end it sent him on his *via dolorosa* —a lone pilgrim on the road to eternity,

'Seeking His Presence, Who alone can bless.'

4

Putali Ba's parents belonged to a sect known as Pranami or Satpranami. It is an eclectic religious sect that aims at combining the best

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elements of Islam and Hinduism. "At one time," in Gandhiji's words, "they were even looked upon as crypto-Muslims."

There used to be a Pranami temple not far away from their home in Porbandar during Mohan's early childhood days. It still exists, though its character seems to have much changed. "After my marriage," Gandhiji once reminisced, "my mother took me to this temple also. It was the only temple of its kind in Porbandar." He had forgotten the exact details of the temple building, he said, but he had a distinct recollection that "there were no idols or images in it; and on the walls there was writing that looked very much like texts from the *Koran*. The dress that the priests wore was unlike what Hindu priests in temples generally wear and their way of praying also resembled somewhat that of the Muslims."

Pranamis are also known as Prannathis. Early in the eighteenth century, one Prannath—a Kshatriya from Kathiawar—founded the sect named after him. In one of his works, *Quiyamatnama*, the attitude taken by the teacher is summed up thus: "The Gospel says that Christ is the head of all, and that he will come and do justice. The Jews say that Moses is the greatest and that all will be saved through him. All follow different customs, and each proclaims the greatness of his own master. Thus idly quarrelling, they fix upon different names, but the end of all is the same, the Supreme God."[20]

Prannath disallowed to his followers the use of intoxicating drugs, tobacco, wine, meat and unlawful visits to women and preached peace and charity. He prohibited idolatry. A visitor who visited a temple of his at Panna in 1764 has recorded that he saw in it "a small bed, with a turban on it, called Prannath's seat". On each side of it was a stool. On one of these was a copy of the *Koran* and on the other a copy of the *Puranas* "with learned men of both religions in attendance, ready to give profitable answers to all inquiries".[21] Most of the replies made to him "involved the unity of God".[22]

Eclectic in belief, Putali Ba rigidly conformed to orthodox practices. The morning routine of worship and prayer in her household began at six and lasted for two hours. Before it was over, a Brahmin, who used to officiate as the family priest in the Gandhi family, would come down Kaba Gandhi Street, singing devotional songs, to collect alms. After her husband's death, religion became Putali Ba's chief consolation. Her house was frequented by Jaina monks with their emphasis on good works and sanctity of all life. Such was her reputation for piety that they did not hesitate to accept alms from her house, although it is contrary to their usual practice to receive alms from non-Jainas.

Mohan's father with his commonsense view of religion was not interested in metaphysical subtleties. But he was a seeker. He was fond of the company of men of religion. Being a man of the world, he had coming to his house daily also men of various faiths—Muslims, Zoroastrians and others; and it was one of Mohan's rare privileges to listen to

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their discussions on matters religious and mundane, and garner pearls of wisdom as they dropped from their lips. It fostered in him the values and attitudes that his father represented. These became in later life his outstanding characteristics, viz. a keen sense of dignity and self-respect, strict adherence to principle, an understanding sympathy and ripe mellowed wisdom of a man of the world; and above all a burning sense of truth and justice that transcends the letter of law.

Next to the example of his father and mother, what influenced Mohan religiously most during his early childhood was the faith of his nurse Rambha. We have already seen that he used to conjure up ghosts and goblins whenever the lights went out. His nurse used to tell him: "There are no ghosts, but if you are afraid, repeat *Ramanama.*" He did so and the fear left him. It planted in him an implicit belief in the saving power of *Ramanama* (God's name) when repeated in the fulness of faith. He came to regard it as the panacea for all ills, spiritual and physical. What he learnt in his childhood became later in life "a huge thing in my mental firmament. It is a sun that has brightened my darkest hour."[23]

During his father's illness at Porbandar, Ladha Maharaj of Bileshwar used to call daily and chant to him the *Tulasi Ramayana.* Mohan used to hear the singing as he massaged his father's legs. The sweet music of Tulasidas's immortal epic was as ambrosia to his hungry soul and the memory of it haunted him ever afterwards. It became next only to the *Gita,* the chief consolation of his life, and he clung to it as a child clings to its mother's breast.

His parents' example fostered in him an attitude of broad tolerance and respect for all faiths. But for Christianity he developed a strong dislike. The reason for this was the Christian missionary. Historically, Christian missionary activity came to India by and large as an adjunct to the British conquest, and as an expression of, what Gandhiji called, "religious imperialism of the conquering race". God had sent His own chosen people to rule over the "heathen". The "heathen" had, therefore, to be "reclaimed" for the glory of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, the methods pursued by the missionary for the "gathering of souls" were not always fair or even scrupulous. Good-hearted evangelists cast covetous eyes on school-boys who as pupils came under their influence. "The method of these zealous followers of the Cross," writes the biographer of Dadabhai Naoroji, referring to some of the most respected professors in the Bombay Presidency, "was simple—for one hour given to Christianity, a gift of four hours' English, History, Geography and Mathematics."[24] Their most beneficent activity became a snare to trap the unwary when it was used for the attainment of their primary object of proselytisation. The public came to regard them as "wolves in sheep's clothing". Among the Parsis they were anathematised as "devils in human shape".[25] The fear inspired by their insidious tactics prevented Dadabhai Naoroji from

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accepting a scholarship offered by Sir Erskine Perry, the Chief Justice of Bombay Presidency, for going to England to study law. Their denunciation and abuse of non-Christian faiths, coupled with the fact that "conversion" very often meant also initiation of the baptised into the practice of drinking, beef-eating and adoption of Western mode of dress and living, created a strong feeling against them which was not confined to the orthodox. Mohan had heard of one such case of conversion in Rajkot. Surely, he thought, a religion that required one to eat beef, drink liquor and change one's own clothes did not deserve the name. "I also heard that the new convert had already begun abusing the religion of his ancestors."[26] It filled him with a deep revulsion against Christianity.

The Presbyterians had a Mission at Rajkot. Some time Mohan and his companions on their way to school caught from a distance the glimpse of a missionary preaching to a crowd near the school gate. This was the Rev. H. R. Scott. They had not the slightest notion as to what he preached. "I, at least, never went near him then," Gandhiji narrated to Joseph Doke afterwards. But occasionally, they heard "rumours of his ill treatment" by the people. Later, Gandhiji says, he got to know him and to admire him.[27]

In 1926, after reading in Gandhiji's *My Experiments with Truth* his reminiscences of the Christian missionaries' activities in Rajkot, Mr. Scott wrote to Gandhiji categorically denying that he had ever "poured abuse on Hindus and their gods", or that he induced any of those whom he converted to "eat beef and drink liquor".[28] Gandhiji accepted the repudiation so far as the Rev. Scott personally was concerned, but stuck to his statement concerning the proselytising activities of the missionaries in general. In course of time he got over his revulsion to Christianity. But his quarrel with the Christian missionaries remained. They never ceased to be at loggerheads with him, and he with them.

In the school where Mohan read religion was not taught. It had, therefore, to be taught at home. When he was sent to a primary school at Rajkot, his brother put him under a Brahmin who taught him, along with the other children in the family, the *Rama Raksha Stotra* and *Vishnu Puja*. He learnt them by heart. But he did not know enough Sanskrit fully to understand their meaning. Discourses on the *Bhagavata Purana*, owing to the poor quality of the recitation and the commentary, left him unimpressed.

Stories of immorality in some of the Vaishnava temples that he had heard, undermined his faith in the orthodox formalism of his forefathers; and that door of spiritual solace was shut to him. Troubled by his inner questionings, he turned to the pages of *Manusmriti*. The apocryphal account of creation in it only confused his mind, just as the *Book of Genesis* confused him later when he came to the Bible. Conflicting texts in *Manusmriti* relating to non-killing and flesh diet added to his confusion and gave an impetus to his experiment in meat-eating. "I also felt that it

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was quite moral to kill serpents, bugs and the like. I remember to have killed at that age bugs and such other insects, regarding it as a duty."[29]

Bewildered, he placed his difficulties before his elders, but they could give no satisfactory reply. One prop after another of his faith began to crumble. Between a corrupt Hinduism and atheism, to his young mind there seemed to be no alternative. So, atheism it was. "For a while," he told Joseph Doke afterwards, "I was practically an atheist." In this welter of confusion, however, one thing took firm hold of his mind, "that morality is the basis of things and that truth is the substance of all morality".[30] Truth became his sheet anchor. It held when all else had given way.

* * *

Uka—a scavenger—used to come to the house in those far away days to remove the night soil and sweep the courtyard. Mohan was not to brush against him. If perchance he did, he had to bathe to cleanse himself of the unholy "touch". Similarly in school if he happened to touch an "untouchable", his mother would ask him to go and touch a Muslim. One defilement cancelled the other! He had many a tussle with his parents over this question. Simply out of reverence for his mother he often did as he was told. But his heart rebelled. "I told my mother that she was entirely wrong in considering physical contact with Uka as sinful."[31] In the *Vishnu Puja* verses that he had been made to learn by heart, came the text: "जले विष्णु: स्थले विष्णु:", "The Lord pervades the water, the Lord pervades land." If the Lord was everywhere, he asked himself, how could He not be in Uka also? Neither could he understand how *Rama Raksha*, which could destroy all fear of ghosts, could countenance any such thing as fear of contact with the "untouchable", or the *Ramayana*, in which an "untouchable" takes Rama across the Ganges in his boat, could countenance the idea of regarding any human being as "untouchable" on the ground that he was a polluted soul.

The questioning turn of mind of his early years developed into the habit of subjecting everything including current religious and social usages to the test of reason. It planted in his soul the seed of rebellion against the institution of untouchability. It was his prayer, he later declared, that if he had to be reborn he might be born as an untouchable, "so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings, and the affronts levelled at them (and) . . . free myself and them from that miserable condition. . . ."[32]

He was ineffably moved by a stanza from a Gujarati poet which enjoins giving "for a bowl of water a goodly meal", to pay "for a simple penny" back "with gold", and to lay down one's life to save another's who has rescued you.

> . . . The truly noble know all men as one,
> And return with gladness good for evil done.

This was for him the essence of religion.

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5

Kaba Gandhi's death had cast gloom on the entire family. Mohan was grief stricken. The fortunes of the Gandhi family were at a low ebb. He was expecting to be a father soon. On his young shoulders rested a heavy load of responsibility. He was weighed down by care. In the following year he was to appear for the Entrance (now the matriculation) examination. But his father's illness had left him hardly any time for preparation. The percentage of failures used to be high. The school authorities had, therefore, made the preliminary test stiff. Only one student out of the total 32 passed in all the subjects. Mohan failed in three. But he worked hard. Forms were issued to sixteen students to appear for the university examination. Of these ten passed, Mohan managing barely to scrape through, with 247½ marks out of the total 625 for all subjects. His position in the university was 404th, 5th in "Kattyawar High School".

On the advice of his relatives he joined Samaldas College at Bhavnagar but felt out of his element in the new setting. The subjects taught and the way they were taught did not interest him. His weak English was a serious handicap. The standard of teaching English in his school at Rajkot must have been very poor. For we find the poor boy, even after he had passed out of the High School, writing in the journal of his voyage to England, "Here we received a rogue", for "met a rogue", the Gujarati word for both "received" and "met" being the same! No wonder he found the course "difficult" and could not follow the lectures. Besides, he was unwell. He had recurring attacks of headache and his nose bled frequently. He felt homesick and lost hope of passing the examination that year.

At the end of the first term, the college closed for the summer vacation and Mohan found some relief at home. It was the middle of May. He had been here hardly a fortnight when one day Mavji Dave, a friend and adviser of the Gandhi family, came to their house. Besides being a learned Brahmin, he was a shrewd man of the world. They called him Joshiji.

Learning in the course of the conversation with his brother and mother that Mohan was studying at Bhavnagar College, he asked the lad how he was doing there. Mohan told him that he did not expect to pass at the first attempt. Joshiji thereupon asked his brother why Mohan was not sent to England for law. The expenses, he assured him, would not exceed Rs. 5,000. "Try to get some scholarship. Apply to Junagadh and Porbandar States. See my son Kevalram and if you fail in getting the pecuniary help and if you have no money, sell your furniture. But anyhow send Mohandas to London. . . . This is the only means to keep reputation of your deceased father."[33]

Anticipating Putali Ba's objection on the ground of religion to her son going abroad where, she had heard, one could not live without

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eating meat, Joshiji said: "Let him take with him some *udad dal*, and cook for himself. There will (then) be no objection on the score of religion."

Mohan had been listening to this conversation with bated breath. He had long nursed the dream of going abroad for study. He knew that was his father's idea, too, concerning him. Could he not be sent abroad for the study of medicine, he asked.

But his brother objected. Their father had always disapproved of the dissection of dead bodies which medical studies involved, he said. "Father intended you for the bar."

Brushing aside the brother's objection, Joshiji put in: "The *Shastras* are not against the medical profession." But he agreed that Mohan should go to qualify not for medicine but for the bar. A medical degree would not make a Dewan of Mohan, the times had changed, he said, and he would be satisfied with nothing less.

His elder brother had a father's love for Mohan. He had great faith in Mavji Dave. He made a promise to him to send Mohan to London. He laid down only one condition. Mohan must obtain the consent of his mother and of his uncle.

From now on Mohan began to float on the clouds. But where was the money to come from? His father had never cared to lay by much. When asked the reason for it, he used to say that his children were his wealth. "If he hoarded much money, he would spoil them."[34] Only he had not expected to pass away so soon.

Mohan thought of selling his wife's ornaments. These would fetch two to three thousand rupees. But his brother assured him that he would find the money. The same day he mentioned Mavji's proposal to two of Mohan's cousins. They both liked the proposal and one of them, Meghjibhai, offered to provide Rs. 5,000.

Mohan was elated, but his clear-eyed mother knew better. She warned him that he would never get the money from Meghji when the time came, if ever it came, which she thought would never come. And subsequent events proved that so far as Meghji's promise was concerned, she was right.

As advised by Mavji, Mohan saw Kevalram. He was a leading lawyer of Rajkot with a busy practice. He told Mohan that the expenses would be not less than Rs. 10,000. Besides, he would have to set aside all his religious scruples. "You will have to eat meat, (and) you must drink. You cannot live without that."[35] As if all this was not enough, he capped it by saying, "Look here, you are still very young. There are many temptations in London. You are apt to be entrapped by them."[36]

Mohan thought of two Kathiawar lads of their acquaintance, Pranjivan Mehta and Dalpatram Shukla, who had been given scholarships by Morvi State for study abroad. Surely the Gandhi family had some claim on the States of Porbandar and Rajkot on the score of services

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rendered by his father and grandfather to those States. He put it to Kevalram; what did he think of it? In reply Kevalram suggested applying to Porbandar State for a scholarship. Being asked, however, whether he would help in obtaining it, he said he would "do anything but this".

This was disappointing, but Mohan was not the one easily to give up. He set about obtaining his mother's consent. This did not prove to be difficult. "I began to introduce the subject to my mother in a joke. The joke was turned to reality in no time. . . . I was the pet of my mother. She had much faith in me and so I succeeded in getting over her superstition."[37] To make her nod consent to a three years' separation proved more difficult. However, "by showing the exaggerated advantages" of going to England, he got her to accede with much reluctance to his request.

The next thing was to go to Porbandar and try to obtain his uncle's consent and get a scholarship. From now on there was no end to his difficulties. Like the heads of the proverbial hydra they grew faster than they could be lopped off. Once a date was fixed for the departure. But an hour before the time for departure, a trivial accident upset the plan. "I was always quarrelling with my friend Sheikh Mehtab. On the day of departure, I was quite engrossed in thinking about the quarrel. We had a musical party at night. I did not enjoy it. . . . At about 10-30 p.m., the party ended and we all went to see Meghji."[38] On the way, while absorbed in the "madcap thoughts" of London on one side and the thoughts of Sheikh Mehtab on the other, he collided with a carriage and felt dizzy but put a brave face upon it. They then entered Meghji's house. Here he stumbled against a stone and fell down on the ground senseless. "I was not myself for five minutes. They thought I was dead. But fortunately . . . the ground on which I fell was . . . smooth. I came to my senses at last and all of them were . . . joyful. The mother was sent for. . . . I told them that I was quite well. But none would allow me to go, though I afterwards came to know that my bold and dearest mother would have allowed me to go. But she feared the calumny of other people."[39]

With great difficulty, he was able to leave for Porbandar after some days, making the journey partly by bullock cart and partly by camel. His elder brother Karsandas had come out at the Khadi bridge to meet him. Mohan was overjoyed. Together they went to their old ancestral house, hallowed by their father's and grandfather's memories and redolent of their carefree childhood days. Mohan saw his uncle. The uncle said he was going on a pilgrimage to Varanasi. In his heart of hearts he liked the idea but he was too cautious to say so openly, much less cooperate directly in his going to England. He was afraid that if he did so, he might be outcasted. The utmost that he could be made to concede after three days of arguing and coaxing was that if his mother did not mind his going to England, he had no right to interfere.

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This was "easily interpreted into 'yes' ". But when Mohan asked the old man whether he would not give him a note to Mr Lely, the Administrator of Porbandar, he answered: "Don't you see I am going on a pilgrimage? How can I say 'yes' to your unholy proposal?" Instead, he suggested that Mohan should write to Mr Lely. Lely was a good man. He would not decline a request for an appointment, he said, and might even help if Mohan wrote to him in an appropriate manner.

Mr Lely was out of station. On the following Sunday he returned from his tour. Mohan had never had an interview with an Englishman before. "But thoughts of London made me bold. I had carefully learnt up a few sentences and had bowed low and saluted him with both hands. But all to no purpose!"[40] Sahib was in a hurry. "He saw me when he was ascending the ladder of the upper storey of his bungalow. . . . I had small talk with him in Gujarati."[41] Brusquely he told Mohan, "You know Porbandar State is very poor. You must graduate first. Then you can come to me and I will consider it." With this, he hurried upstairs, leaving poor Mohan dumbfounded.

Mohan now turned to his other cousin, Parmanandbhai. The wily cousin said he would gladly give Rs. 5,000 provided their uncle approved of his going to London, and even swore by his son, knowing full well that the uncle would never dare openly to give his approval. Mohan was taken in. After a few days he returned to Rajkot full of hope, first going to Bhavnagar to dispose of his furniture and vacate the house he had rented. This did not take more than a day. The parting with friends and the kind landlady at Bhavnagar was not without tears.

At Rajkot in the meantime his friend Sheikh Mehtab, full of pranks as ever, had, during his absence, forged a letter with his signature, reminding Meghji of his promise to give Rs. 5,000. Meghji solemnly reiterated his promise. But when he was asked to implement it, he went completely back on his word and from that day "always acted the part of an enemy, speaking ill of me before everybody", which made Putali Ba very angry and sometimes even uneasy.

An agonising period of suspense followed. Before setting out of the country, Mohan had to see Colonel Watson, the Political Agent, and he was not expected to come to Rajkot before May 19, 1888. The news of Mohan's decision to go to England had in the meantime leaked out. Pressure began to be put on all those connected with his going to England to discourage him from proceeding, and failing that, to dissociate themselves from his unholy plan. He could not sleep at night and had nightmares. "Some . . . dissuaded me from going to London and some advised me to do so. Sometimes my mother, too, asked me not to go, and what was strange . . . not infrequently, my brother also changed his mind."

At last, Col. Watson came. Mohan saw him. He said: "I shall think about it." But no help came from him. It was after great difficulty he gave

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a trivial note of introduction, which he pompously declared was "worth one lakh of rupees!"[42] The Thakore Saheb of Rajkot gave a photograph. Disgusted with the fulsome flattery which he had to practise on this occasion, Mohan recorded in his diary: "Had it not been for my credulous and dearest brother, I would never have resorted to such a piece of gross flattery."[43]

As the day for his departure to Bombay approached, everybody, who was connected however remotely with the family, felt that it was his right and duty to interfere. Some people went to his mother and poured into her ears lurid tales about the muck-hole of sin and temptation into which she was sending her son, and how young men who went there took to meat and liquor—not to mention women.

"How about all this?" the pious mother asked Mohan.

Mohan solemnly promised to her that he would avoid all three. "Cannot you trust me," he asked, "I will not tell you a lie."

Of course the mother trusted him, but she had heard how people were bewitched in that strange and distant land. How could she trust him in such a circumstance. Finally, however, she said she would consult Becharji Maharaj, a Jaina monk who originally belonged to the same community as the Gandhis. The monk told her he would administer to her boy the three vows and then he could safely be allowed to go. This being done, the mother gave her consent. "I vowed not 'to touch wine, woman and meat'."[44]

His wife's parents were even more perturbed, largely on account of their daughter. Night after night, Mohan had to sit with his father-in-law to hear and answer his objections. As the day of leave-taking drew near, he nearly collapsed under the cumulative strain. "I knew . . . my health was failing. Sleeping, waking, drinking, eating, walking, running, reading, I was dreaming and thinking of (the time when I would go to) England and what I would do on that momentous day."[45]

At last the day came. He took leave of his mother. She was "hiding her eyes, full of tears", behind her hands, "but the sobbing was clearly heard." He himself, however, dared not weep, "even though my heart was breaking". If he wept, it would be thought that he had weakened and he might not be allowed to go. Last but not least came the parting with the wife. "She, of course, had begun sobbing long before. I went to her and stood like a dumb statue for a moment. I kissed her, and she said, 'Don't go'. What followed I need not describe."[46]

His school fellows gave him a farewell address. When he rose to reply, he felt nervous. Halfway through his remarks, he began to quake. All he could fumble was that he hoped that some of them would follow in his footsteps and on their return "work wholeheartedly for big reforms in India".

Many came to bid farewell. On August 10, 1888, the day appointed for departure, he, accompanied by his brother, his friend Sheikh Mehtab

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and two others, left for Bombay with the blessings of his elders. Some friends got into the carriage on the way. They travelled with him for a few stations and then returned.

In Bombay the opposition to his going that had started at Rajkot, accentuated by the malice and intrigues of his caste-fellows, turned into persecution. He was staying in the heart of the city. He could scarcely stir out without being pointed and stared at by some one or other. On one occasion while he was walking near the Town Hall, he was surrounded and hooted. His poor brother could do nothing but helplessly look on. He was pestered by many deputations from his caste-fellows. When they failed to make an impression on him, a huge meeting of all the members of the caste was summoned. Everybody was to attend it on pain of paying a fine of five annas. He was virtually dragged out of the house, and forced to sit in the centre of the gathering. Finding that their remonstrations were of no avail, one of the Mahajans—the head Patel—harrangued him thus: "We were your father's friends and therefore we feel for you. As heads of the caste, you know our power. We are positively informed that you will have to eat flesh and drink wine in England. Moreover, you have to cross the waters. All this, you must know, is against the caste rules. Therefore, we command you to reconsider your decision, or else the heaviest punishment will be meted out to you."

Mohan replied: "I am sorry that I cannot alter my decision. What I have heard about England is quite different from what you say; one need not take meat and wine there. As for crossing the waters, if our brethren can go as far as Aden, why could not I go to England? I am deeply convinced that malice is at the root of all these objections."

Livid with anger, the Mahajan boomed: "This boy has lost his senses. We command everyone not to have anything to do with him. He who will support him must be treated as an outcaste. Whoever helps him or goes to see him off at the docks shall be punishable with a fine of a rupee, annas four."

Mohan was on the point of making an appropriate rejoinder when his brother restrained him. But under the threat of excommunication, even he began to vacillate. He said nothing to Mohan, but he asked some of his friends to try to persuade him to reconsider his decision. Finding, however, that Mohan was determined, he mustered courage and never again flinched, and in fact he was not afterwards excommunicated.

The threat of excommunication left Mohan almost completely deserted. The intrigues of his caste-fellows continued. They could not prevent him from going, but they succeeded in delaying his departure by a fortnight. This was engineered with Machiavellian cunning. Mohan was to have sailed on the twenty-first of August. The captain of the steamship company was prevailed upon to advise the brothers, when they

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went to see him, that sailing in August would expose Mohan to the rough weather at sea. The trick worked. Mohan's brother was in no case prepared to take that risk. Taking leave of Mohan he returned to Rajkot. The money for the voyage and the incidentals was entrusted with Mohan's brother-in-law, who was to do the needful when the time came.

So, things were again in the melting pot. It almost began to look as if the intrigues of his opponents were going to succeed after all, when suddenly Mohan learnt that a Junagadh Vakil, Tryambakrai Mazmudar, was about to leave for England. Mohan clutched at it as a God-sent opportunity. Within twenty-four hours, he completed his preparations. But his brother-in-law refused, when he presented him the note which his brother had left, to provide the money for fear of losing his caste. Luckily, a friend, whom he approached, advanced the money which his brother afterwards repaid. This was Ranchhoddas Patwari, who afterwards became the Prime Minister of the Gondal State. Gandhiji never forgot the help rendered to him on this occasion and in his correspondence thereafter always addressed him as *Murabbi* Ranchhoddasbhai (elder brother Ranchhoddas). With the money thus advanced, he purchased his ticket, some clothes and other necessary articles. "Some of the clothes I liked and some I did not like at all. The necktie, which I delighted in wearing later, I then abhorred. The short jacket I looked upon as immodest."[47] On September 4, 1888, he sailed for England by the S.S. *Clyde*.

Mohan's mettle was severely tested during these five months. Any other person with a weaker will and determination might well have given up, but not he. "Now hopeful, now despondent, I dragged along, always trying my best and then depending upon God to show me the cherished goal."[48]

Asked at the end of his stay in England what had made him think of coming and adopting the legal profession, he answered, "In a word, ambition!" He had worthily to maintain the family tradition and live up to his father's expectations. "I thought to myself, if I go to England, not only shall I become a barrister . . . but I shall be able to see England, the land of philosophers and poets, the very centre of civilisation."[49]

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CHAPTER X

THE DAWN OF MANHOOD

1

At 5 p.m., the S.S. *Clyde* weighed anchor and amid the shouting of last minute commands by the ship's officers and wafting of farewells by the passengers to their friends ashore set sail. Mohan stood against the rail of the deck like a statue so long as he could catch a glimpse of the receding shoreline. When it vanished he retired to his cabin, his mind in a turmoil of conflicting emotions.

Travelling with him were Abdul Majid, a first class passenger, and Tryambakrai Mazmudar, a saloon passenger like himself. These two were to be his companions throughout the voyage. Abdul Majid, affecting the air of a grand seigneur, even when he was dressed "worse than a porter", must have been a charming character. Mazmudar had a free and easy manner. He made Mohan feel perfectly at home with him from the start. Total strangers to one another, the mere fact of their being fellow Indians created a bond of kinship among them. Soon they became inseparable.

At six the dinner bell rang. A steward came to ask the trio to go to the dining saloon. Mazmudar had no black coat, as convention demanded, for the evening meal. Mohan, who had already begun to look upon him as his elder brother, readily offered him his and took charge of the key to his cabin door.

Shy to a degree, Mohan had never learnt to handle the knife and fork. He was diffident with his English. "I had to frame every sentence in my mind before I could bring it out."[1] Besides, there was the question of his vegetarianism. He would not know what dishes were meatless and lacked the courage to enquire. He shrank from being laughed at for his awkwardness and could not be persuaded to go to the table even for tea. Mazmudar tried to impress upon him that a lawyer needed to cultivate the gift of the gab. Since Mohan was going out to be called to the bar, he ought to miss no opportunity of associating with English speaking passengers and cultivating their speech. What mattered it if he occasionally made mistakes in English? But nothing could draw Mohan out of his shell. He ate alone in his cabin and for the first two or three days subsisted only on the sweets, fruit and the like that he had brought with him. He might have done so even longer but then Mazmudar made arrangements with

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the ship's boys to cook vegetarian food for the two. The provisions were supplied by the ship's authorities free of charge, and for the rest of their voyage they had hearty Indian vegetarian meals cooked for them to order. Only the ship's boys were extremely dirty. Generally, Mohan preferred English bread to the Indian *chapati*.

This was Mohan's first voyage. He was excited. Everything on board was unfamiliar and wonderful—the dexterity of the sailors, the boundless expanse of the ocean, the smooth motion of the ship. There were musical instruments, cards, chessboard and draughts on board. Mohan occasionally amused himself by hammering at the piano, but for the most part he kept to his cabin. Only when there were not many passengers on the deck did he venture out to enjoy the fresh sea breeze and the loveliness of the view around. On moonlit nights the moon's image dancing in the sea entranced him. And wonder of wonders, one dark night,

> when the sky was clear, the stars were reflected in the water. . . . They appeared like so many diamonds. But I knew that a diamond could not float. Then I thought that they must be some insects which can only be seen at night. Amidst these reflections I looked at the sky and at once found that it was nothing but stars reflected in waters. I laughed at my folly. This reflection of the stars gives us the idea of fireworks. Fancy yourself to be standing on the (top) storey of a bungalow watching the fireworks performed before you.[2]

He proved to be a good sailor, and throughout the voyage never suffered from seasickness. "I always got up at 8 a.m., brushed my teeth and then went to the W.C." Shortly after reaching England he started keeping a journal in which he systematically wrote the full story of his going to England, including his impressions of the voyage. Part of it has survived. No travelogue of a tourist or a sightseer, it is the record of a very serious effort by a pioneer out to blaze the trail for others who might by his example be inspired to follow in his footsteps. Every line is marked by a seriousness of purpose, a passion for detail, and the habit of close observation and originality that characterised his later years. The perspective of the motherland is never lost sight of. No detail, that has a practical bearing, is too trivial for recording—not even the substitution of toilet paper for water in the English closets: "We do not get . . . water and are obliged to use pieces of paper."[3]

On the sixth day at 11 a.m., the ship anchored at Aden and was at once surrounded by swarms of Arab urchins who came in their small row-boats. They retrieved the coins tossed into the sea by the European passengers. Mohan was delighted. "It was a pretty sight. I wish I could do so." But, "careful soul", he goes on to add: "I must say here that we simply saw the boys . . . (fish) out the pieces. We ourselves did not drop a single pie."[4] He was horrified to learn later

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that the poor devils had sometimes their limbs torn off by sharks and other sea monsters, and were driven by sheer necessity to expose themselves to that risk.

With his two friends he visited the Camp at Aden. The style of buildings reminded him of the bungalows at Rajkot, "especially of the new bungalow of the Political Agent".

After three days of sweltering heat in the Red Sea, the ship passed through Hellsgate and entered the Suez Canal with its panorama of multicoloured pilot lights. "The water of the canal is quite dirty. I forget its depth. It is as broad as the (river) Aji at Ramnath." For the first time in his life—he saw the navigation lights in front of a ship. "It appeared like moonlight." The engineering feat of linking the two seas by constructing the Suez Canal evoked the following reflection: "It is indeed marvellous. I cannot think of the genius of a man who invented (*sic!*) it. . . . It is quite right to say that he has competed with nature."[5] The English may be immature but the observations that follow betray no immaturity of judgment. The adolescent has all his wits fully awake:

> Port Said is nothing but a seat of luxury. The women and men there are very cunning. The interpreter will follow to guide you. But you boldly tell him that you do not want him.

In a cafe at Port Said which they visited,

> On one side, . . . we drink coffee or soda or tea, . . . and on the other we hear music. . . . Customers are said to hear music gratis. But . . . as soon as the music is finished, a woman with a plate covered with a handkerchief in her hand comes before every customer. That means that you give her something. . . . We . . . gave six pence to the woman.[6]

Brindisi with its steep, cobbled streets, where the steamer reached at midnight, brought some unsavoury experience of pimps and procurers:

> When you land . . . a man would come and ask you, in case you are a black man: 'Sir, there is a beautiful girl of 14, follow me, Sir, I will take you there, the charge is not high, Sir.' You are at once puzzled. But be calm and answer boldly that you don't want her and tell the man to go away and . . . you will be safe.

Some very practical advice follows:

> If you are in difficulty at once refer to a policeman. . . . Or at once enter a large building ('Thos. Cook or Henry King or some such other agents'). . . . But before you enter it, read the name on the building and make sure that it is open to all. . . . *Don't be miserly. . . . Pay the porter something.*[7]

At Malta, the next port, the steamer was to halt only four hours. Mohan in company with Mazmudar here saw St. Juan's Church

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and the statue of St. Juan, the Armoury Hall with its wonderful tapestries that looked "like very old paintings" but "were not really paintings" at all, and the carriage of Napoleon Bonaparte. The orange gardens were a disappointment, but the visit to an aquarium of gold fish was rewarding. "A great rogue" of a shopkeeper took them to his shop and tried unsuccessfully to cheat them. He again met them in the evening when they returned to the ship. "We . . . paid the rogue, the good interpreter and the carriageman, . . . had a quarrel about the fare with the boatman. The result was, of course, in favour of the boatman."[8] After a brief halt at Gibraltar, the ship passed through the Strait of Gibraltar and entered the Bay of Biscay.

On the eve of his departure from India, well-meaning but ignorant friends had told Mohan that he could not do without meat in the cold climate; he would catch consumption. Others said he might do without meat but not without wine; he would be "numbed with cold". One went so far as to advise him to take with him "eight bottles of whisky", for on leaving Aden he would need these. Another wanted him to smoke, "for his friend was obliged to smoke in London". Mohan was shaken. He would try his best to avoid all those things, he had said to himself. If, however, they were found to be absolutely necessary, he was not sure what he would do. But the pledge that he gave to his mother before leaving India made all the difference, and he now felt that he must—if only for her sake—on no account indulge in any of those things. He, accordingly, told his fellow passengers on the steamer, when they pressed him to take meat, that he did not feel the need. "They said I would require it after leaving Aden. When this turned out untrue, I was to require it after crossing the Red Sea."

There was one Mr. Jeffreys, an English passenger, on board. He had taken very kindly to Mohan. "The weather has not been severe," he said to Mohan, "but in the Bay of Biscay you will have to choose between death and meat and wine."[9] "And it is so cold in England," he added, "that one cannot possibly live there without meat."

Mohan ventured to reply that he had heard that people could and did live there without eating meat. Jeffreys laughed. "Rest assured it is a fib," he said, "no one, to my knowledge, lives there without being a meat-eater." And in the friendliest manner he went on to explain, with all the authority of an experienced elder: "Don't you see that I am not asking you to take liquor, though I do so? But I do think you should eat meat, for you cannot live without it."[10]

"I thank you for your advice," Mohan politely answered. "But I can't go back on my pledge that I have given to my mother. I would far rather go back to India than eat meat in order to remain there."

Once again fears proved to be liars. In the Bay of Biscay, too, Mohan did not feel the need either of meat or of liquor.

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He had been advised before leaving India to collect certificates of his having abstained from meat. He asked his English friend to give him one. He gladly gave it. "I treasured it for some time. But when I saw later that one could get such a certificate in spite of being a meat-eater, it lost all its charm for me."[11]

The weather was raw and a thick fog enveloped the harbour when the S.S. *Clyde* reached Plymouth at about midnight. From here, in another twenty-four hours she dropped anchor at Southampton. The day was Saturday, October 27, 1888.[12]

Leaving his baggage in charge of an agent of Grindlay & Co., Mohan with his two friends reached Victoria Hotel via Tilbury at 4 p.m. Abdul Majid with his usual debonair air stepped into the hotel, leaving his luggage to be looked after by the hotel porter, and ordered him to pay the cabman "his proper fare". When the manager asked him whether he would choose the second floor or not, he, without even caring to inquire about the daily rent, nonchalantly answered, "Yes". "The manager at once gave us a bill of 6s each per day."

Mohan was dazzled by the glamour of the hotel—its swell appointments, the garish electric lights and finally the lift. The boy touched "something" which Mohan thought was the lock of a door, the lift came down, the doors opened and the three went in. "I thought that was a room in which we were to sit for some time."[13] But to his surprise at the push of button again, the "room" went up and left them on the second floor.

Mohan had worn a black suit on the steamer, thinking that the white one that his friends had got him at Bombay would be the fittest to be worn when he landed. Those, however, were the last days of October. To his dismay he found himself to be the only person in white flannels when he stepped ashore. This was against the English sartorial ritual, the rules of "good form" concerning which Nevinson the English publicist has observed that "they have in fact taken the place of the Ten Commandments, and are more strictly observed, at all events than the fourth or the seventh Commandment . . . ." A breach of them, "though not criminal before the law, is more disgraceful than crime." Once on going out to India, he had worn a black tie with a long evening coat. He found that throughout the voyage he was "shunned as a leper". "I could not have done worse if I had spat in a woman's face."[14]

Mohan squirmed under the outraged stares that burned holes through him wherever he went. What was worse, he could not get out of his white suit for another couple of days as he could not expect to get his things which he had left in charge of Grindlay's even on the next day, it being Sunday.

He had taken with him from India four letters of introduction addressed to Dr P. J. Mehta, Dalpatram Shukla, Prince Ranjitsinhji and Dadabhai Naoroji. Dalpatram Shukla had gone there like himself

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to qualify for the bar and Dr P. J. Mehta for higher studies in medicine. Dr Mehta arrived the same evening on receiving a telegram that Mohan had sent him from Southampton. Finding him in flannels, he smiled. But his amusement turned into dismay when Mohan, while talking to him, casually picked up his top hat and, before his friend could stop him, spoiled the fur by passing his hand on it the wrong way. It was clear to Dr Mehta that the "barbarian" would need much grooming before he could be fit for English society. After giving him a few preliminary hints on English etiquette, he told him it would be advisable for him to stay for some time with a private family. He then left him promising to meet again on Monday. It was many years before their respective roles as teacher and pupil were reversed.

The hotel proved to be disconcertingly expensive. On Monday, therefore, as soon as their baggage had arrived, Mohan and Mazmudar paid their hotel bills and shifted to rooms rented by a Sindhi friend whose acquaintance Mazmudar had made at Malta. The hotel bills came to £ 3. What was more, "I had practically starved in spite of this heavy bill! For I could relish nothing. When I did not like one thing, I asked for another, but had to pay for both just the same."[15]

The change to new rooms brought hardly any relief. Mohan felt homesick. "My mother's love always haunted me. At night the tears would stream down my cheeks, and home memories of all sorts made sleep out of the question." The anguish became all the more unbearable, because it could not be shared with some one else. "Everything was strange—the people, their ways, and even their dwellings. I was a complete novice in the matter of English etiquette, and continually had to be on my guard."[16] Then there was the problem of his vegetarianism. But he had burnt his boats. The "inner voice" said there was no turning back. Now that he had come, he must finish the three years' course.

On Monday, when Dr P. J. Mehta went to the hotel, he learnt that Mohan and his friend had already shifted to their new rooms. Obtaining their address from the hotel, he went there. "This won't do," he said to Mohan as soon as he had a look at the appointments in the new place, and forthwith made arrangements for him to live in a family at Richmond for a month "to become acquainted with English way of living".

The new host was all kindness. But little did he realise the young man's plight. Breakfast consisted of oatmeal porridge. It was fairly substantial. But at lunch, with plain boiled spinach, jam and a slice or two of bread, Mohan practically starved. His Indian friend tried to argue him out of his vegetarianism. Casting in Mohan's teeth his childhood experiment in meat-eating, he said: "You have admitted to having eaten meat with relish when it was altogether unnecessary, but now you will not have it when it is quite essential. Where is the sense in this?"

Mohan told him of his promise to his mother. "Humph! childishness, rank superstition!!" the friend exclaimed. "What is the value of

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a vow made before an illiterate mother, and in ignorance of conditions here? . . . It would not be regarded as a vow in law. But since, even after coming here, you are superstitious enough to believe in such nonsense, I cannot help you any more. I only wish you had not come to England." With affectionate banter, he added: "Had you been my own brother, I would have sent you packing."[17]

His friend's taunt touched Mohan to the quick. It was true, he had once eaten meat with relish. Intellectually, he was even now convinced that meat-eating was both necessary and desirable. He felt the ground slipping from under his feet. But his mother's love tugged at his heart-strings and made him proof against all sophistries. "Day in and day out the friend would argue, but I had an eternal negative to face him with. The more he argued, the more uncompromising I became. Daily I would pray for God's protection and get it. Not that I had any idea of God. It was faith that was at work—faith of which the seed had been sown by the good nurse Rambha."[18]

The friend buttressed his arguments by reading out to Mohan passages from Bentham's *Theory of Utility*. "You may be right," Mohan answered in effect, "but all this is beyond me. A vow is a vow. I cannot go back on it. I am helpless."

The friend argued no more. He even began to respect him for his sincerity and strength of character. Though he himself both drank and smoked, he asked the youngster to keep away from both.

2

To become a barrister one had to "join" one of the Inns of Court. The fourth term began in November. At the end of his month's "apprenticeship" at Richmond, therefore, Mohan's friends, Dr Mehta and Dalpatram Shukla, arranged for him to stay as a lodger in an Anglo-Indian family in West Kensington, Richmond being too far away from London. There were four Inns of Court to choose from: Inner Temple, Middle Temple, Lincoln's Inn and Gray's Inn. Middle Temple was the most patronised by the Indians, but Inner Temple was considered to be the most aristocratic. Mohan chose the last. On November 6, 1888, he obtained the admission form by paying one guinea and joined the Inner Temple.

Three days later in a letter to his brother he wrote: "The cold here is now bitter but such bad weather generally does not last long. In spite of the cold I have no need of meat or liquor, which fills my heart with joy and thankfulness. I am now keeping very good health."

He had won his first battle but the fight was by no means over. His ordeal continued. The food served by his Anglo-Indian landlady at West Kensington did not suit him at all. No fault of the landlady, as he was the first vegetarian to board with her. For breakfast there would be

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bread, butter, jam and tea, and porridge occasionally. For lunch there was bread, butter and cheese invariably; and for dinner bread, vegetable soups and a vegetable—mostly potatoes, and some fresh fruit. Vegetarian cookery in those early days, when vegetarianism in England was in its infancy and the art of food reform had not yet developed, was an infliction. Salads were practically unknown. Vegetables were boiled by lowering them, tied in a handkerchief, into a cauldron of boiling water, the same water being used again and again for the purpose. Robbed of all nutritive value and flavour, they tasted insipid beyond words. Bread at the table of English meat-eaters figures only as an accompaniment to help them eat meat, whereas in the case of Indians, even when they are meat-eaters, bread is *the* staple; meat comes in chiefly as an aid to consume their bread. It could never have occurred to these kind people that to a vegetarian like Mohan, bread was the "staff of life" and Mohan was too shy to ask for more than he was served with. His stock of sweets and savouries was exhausted and fresh stock that he had sent for from home had not arrived. He felt hungry all the time.

He had not yet begun his studies regularly. Under Dalpatram Shukla's advice, he began reading newspapers. The *Daily News*, the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Pall Mall Gazette* he glanced through every day. The *Answers* was another favourite—"at times smutty, but witty and very readable always," he afterwards used to say.

He began to take keen interest in current events. The struggle for Irish Home Rule was in full swing. Parnellism had touched the high-water mark of its success. He studiously followed from day to day the proceedings of the Commission on Irish crimes and Lord Russell's brilliant cross-examination that exposed the Pigott letters as clumsy forgeries and vindicated Parnell. Another *cause celebre* that made headlines and to which he often used to refer afterwards was the trial of Mrs Maybrick for the murder of her husband by arsenic poisoning. The Press used to be full of all sorts of innuendoes against the conduct of the judges while the case was in progress. It gave him a valuable insight into the Contempt of Court law which he drew upon when later he himself was involved in Contempt of Court proceedings.

It was a period of rapid development of municipal activity, of political sterility and parliamentary paralysis, when "real national growth of the period was not from the centre outwards but from the circumference inwards".[19] Working men and social reformers were being driven more and more into a dislike for tinkering reform. He was a careful reader. The habit of newspaper reading that he had formed brought him in close touch with all these trends and conditioned his thinking on those questions in latter years.

With plenty of time on hand, he began to hunt for a good vegetarian restaurant. It had been suggested to him that if he took all the meals in the family and tea very often, he would be considered stingy.

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He, therefore, made it a practice to lunch out at least once a week and take tea in the family only thrice a week. He would trudge ten or twelve miles each day, go to a cheap restaurant and have his fill. Still he was never satisfied.

One day he asked a gentleman to direct him to a vegetarian restaurant which he remembered having once passed by. It was the Porridge Bowl. But on reaching the place indicated he found himself instead before the Central Restaurant in Farringdon Street. "The sight of it filled me with the same joy that a child feels on getting a thing after its own heart." For the first time since his arrival in England, he had a hearty meal. Exhibited inside a glass window, as he entered the restaurant, was Henry Salt's book *A Plea for Vegetarianism*. He immediately purchased a copy for one shilling, took it home and read it from cover to cover. It gave him a reasoned basis of vegetarianism. Hitherto he had been a "convinced meat-eater", though not a practising one. He now became a vegetarian by choice. God had come to his aid, he felt. The spread of vegetarianism became his mission.

His growing interest in vegetarianism began to worry his friends. They were afraid that his vegetarian fad might affect his health, or otherwise turn him into a crank and lead him to fritter away his energies in a wild-goose chase after dietetic experiments. One day one of them planned a little stratagem, which he thought might reform him. He invited him to come out with him to see a play. Before the play he took him to the fashionable Holborn Restaurant for dinner. Perhaps he thought that there at least he would, if only for decency's sake, behave and unquestioningly accept whatever was served on the table. But he had reckoned without his client. As soon as the soup was served, Mohan turned to the waiter to inquire what it consisted of. His friend noticed the movement. "You duffer, you are not fit for decent society," he sharply said to him. "If you cannot behave, you had better leave this place, have your dinner elsewhere and wait for me outside." Mohan quietly left the place. Outside under the night sky, the din and clatter of the diners' and winers' tables within seemed a thing remote and unreal like the memory of an ugly dream. He felt once more at peace. There was a vegetarian restaurant nearby. He went there. But it had closed. So he went without food that night and, not letting his friend know about it, accompanied him to the theatre.

So far his reaction was by no means atypical. Any other young man in his place might have, in normal circumstances, behaved in the same manner. But the sequel, as recorded by himself thirty-six years after the event, is characteristic. He did not let the incident affect in the least his relations with his friend. "I could see and appreciate the love by which all my friend's efforts were actuated, and my respect for him was all the greater on account of our differences in thought and action."[20] He began furiously to think what he could do to make himself worthy

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of his love and esteem. His vow of vegetarianism he could not give up. It was sacrosanct. But he could and would try, he said to himself, to make up for his vegetarianism by shedding his awkwardness. "I decided . . . I should assure him (my friend) that I would be clumsy no more, but try to become polished . . . by cultivating other accomplishments which fitted one for polite society."[21]

Years rolled by and the shy, awkward, self-withdrawn lad became the world-famous Mahatma. Some time after he had in his Autobiography described the aforementioned episode, his friend of old days, now a flourishing barrister, visited the Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmati. Some inmates of the Ashram, referring to the certificate he had given to the lad Mohan in the Holborn Restaurant on that memorable night in London, said to him: "Shukla Saheb (for that was the friend's name), you once dubbed him a duffer, what do you think now?"

"He is just what he used to be, he has not reformed a bit," Shukla Saheb replied with a suave smile.

3

Mohan now set about to become "more English than an Englishman", with the same deadly earnestness as had characterised him in all his undertakings. He invested nineteen shillings in a chimney-pot hat, had an evening suit tailored in Bond Street—the centre of fashionable life in London, corresponding to the present Saville Row—got his brother to send him a double watch-chain of gold, and began to be very punctilious about his dress. He learnt to tie his tie, to wear a ready-made bow being not "correct" and spent a good deal of time every day before a mirror arranging his stiff, rebellious hair properly, besides cultivating all the "civilised habits" befitting the role of a man about town. This went on for three months, one thing leading to another. To qualify himself for polite society, he decided to learn French and take lessons in dancing and elocution. He joined a dancing class, paying a fee of 3 guineas for a term. To his dismay he found that he could not keep step as he could not follow the piano. So, he purchased a violin for three guineas, and engaged a tutor to teach him to play upon it. "The violin was to cultivate the ear, it only cultivated disappointment." He engaged still another tutor to give him lessons in elocution. The elocution teacher recommended Bell's *Standard Elocutionist* as the text book and Mohan began with Pitt's speech. This was his last step in this direction. Mr. Bell "rang the bell of alarm in my ear and I awoke".

His "aping the English gentleman" had been no abandonment to frivolity, but a very serious pursuit of an ideal, however mistaken. Even in his infatuation he had been wide awake. He had kept account of every farthing he had spent. "My expenses were carefully calculated. Every little item, such as omnibus fares or postage or a couple of

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coppers spent on newspapers", was carefully entered, and "the balance struck every evening before going to bed."[22] As he surveyed, night after night, with a sinking heart the mounting expense figures and the shrinking cash balance, it became to him plain as day-light that at this rate his stay in England would cost him much more than he had anticipated. Something had to be done. Accordingly, in December, 1888, he drafted a letter to F. S. P. Lely, Administrator of Porbandar State. As he was not sure whether F. S. P. Lely would care to reply to his letter, he sent the draft of it to his brother for his consideration:

Trusting that nearly £ 666, which was all my brother could with great difficulty spare for me, would be sufficient for my three years' stay in London, I left India for receiving legal education in England. . . . But now from two months' experience in London I find that . . . in order to live here comfortably and to receive good education, I shall require an extra help of £ 400.

During the late rule of H.H. the Rana Saheb, very little encouragement was given to education. But we can naturally expect that education must be encouraged under the English Administration. . . . I hope, therefore, that you may please render me some pecuniary help. . . .[23]

In another letter to Col. Watson, recalling the "great deal of interest you took in my father" and how "you . . . had extended to him your hand of friendship", he wrote:

I have very little doubt that you will take the same interest in what concerns him and I feel confident that you will try your best to procure me some substantial help which would facilitate my course of study in this country.[24]

It is not clear whether these letters were actually despatched. Nothing, however, came out of it. He began to have second thoughts on his ambition to become an "English gentleman". After all, he had not come to England for that purpose, he said to himself. He informed his elocution teacher that he must discontinue taking further lessons in elocution, requested his music teacher to dispose of his violin for what it might fetch and told her that he had discovered he had been pursuing a false idea and must retrace his steps. She was a sensible woman. "She encouraged me in the determination to make a complete change."[25]

Three things remained with him permanently. The habit of maintaining a strict account of his expenditure, which he had cultivated, enabled him later to handle huge public funds without a mishap. He learnt to take care of his consonants and the art of deliberate articulation, which enabled his speech to be clearly heard even to the remotest corner of a monster gathering. His meticulousness in dress persisted for years and showed through the elegant folds of the upper garment and loincloth of even Churchill's "half-naked fakir".

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4

The decision to be himself instead of "aping the English gentleman", lifted a great weight off Mohan's soul and he set about to reorder his whole life in conformity with his new outlook. In the Anglo-Indian household in West Kensington where he lived, he had to pay 30s per week for board and lodging. They had their fixed hours for meals; he was expected to be punctual at the table. If he found that he would not be able to arrive in time for his meal, he dined out. This and the afternoon teas came to another 10s a week. Besides, courtesy demanded that he should occasionally take out the members of the family to dinner and attend parties with them. That meant still further expense. He spent a good deal unnecessarily on fares also. Thus he managed to spend about £12 per month. This was considered very economical and some other Indian young men of his acquaintance were spending that amount. But they had the benefit of scholarships. He figured out that the actual cost of his food in the family in which he lived could not come to more than 7s per week. He had to pay 30s a week not because the cost of his living came to that much or even half that amount, but for the privilege of enjoying their company. Besides, if he lived in their midst, he had to—it was but fair that he should—give some time to them, or it would be considered impolite. It was impossible for him in the circumstances to lead a regular student's life.

He decided to hire a suite of rooms and live by himself instead of living in a family. The rooms were selected within easy walking distance of the place where he had to work, and were changed from time to time according to need. This enabled him to gain experience of different parts of London. He made it a rule not to use a conveyance when he could walk, thus combining walking exercise with economy. These changes saved him half the expenses and the long walks "of eight or ten miles a day" kept him physically fit.

It was the end of June, 1889. The Bar examination was still a far way off. F. S. P. Lely's words, "Graduate first and then come to me", rang in his ears. His weak English had always worried him. He felt the need to add some literary accomplishment to his law degree. Oxford and Cambridge were too expensive, and going there would have involved a further stay of three or four years in England which he could not afford. But he was told that he could take the London Matriculation Examination without any additional expense to speak of. Examinations were held twice a year—in January and in June. He decided to sit for the examination in January following.

There was a formidable list of subjects to prepare, including Latin, which was altogether new to him, and a modern language. "It was an almost impossible task for me. But the aspirant after being an English gentleman chose to convert himself into a serious student."[26] He framed

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his own time-table "to the minute", joined a private matriculation class and started work in right earnest. Thus closed his first year in England.

He took his examination between January 13 and January 17, 1890, and then left for Ventnor to attend a Vegetarian Congress. Fairly comprehensive lists of visitors to holiday resorts were printed those days in some local papers. His name appears among visitors staying at Osborne House, Madeira Road (Shelton's Vegetarian Hotel), in the *Isle of Wight Mercury* and *The Ventnor Gazette* in their issues of February 1 and February 7, but not thereafter. He must have, therefore, arrived there some time between January 23 and January 30. Over-exertion while preparing for his examination had left him weary in mind and body. He badly needed rest. To recuperate he decided to take a month's holiday at Brighton, arriving there in the second week of February. But with his passion for experimentation, he turned even his holiday into another venture in the simple life.

The result of the Matriculation examination was published on February 19 at 2 p.m. in London. A telegram from a friend brought the news. He had got ploughed in Latin.

He had worked hard. But with two new subjects to prepare almost from scratch and with the examination hardly five months off, not all his intelligence and industry could pull him through. He did not lose heart, however, he says. Without wasting a sigh in vain regret, he changed his subjects, substituted Heat and Light in the Science Group for Chemistry, which, owing to lack of facilities for making experiments, did not interest him, and braced himself up for another trial in June next.

As a part of his preparation for another trial he set about still further to simplify his life for which his experiment in self-help and plain living had prepared the way. How he launched on that experiment and succeeded in cutting down his living expenses to one shilling a day will be described in another chapter.

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CHAPTER XI

IN SEARCH OF GOALS

1

THE ENGLAND to which Mohan went was the England of the Sydney Webbs and Bernard Shaw, Bradlaugh and Annie Besant, Keir Hardie and John Burns, Edward Carpenter and Henry Salt, William Howard and Havelock Ellis, Sydney Olivier, Hyndman and Ramsay Macdonald. The publication of Darwin's epoch-making work on the Evolution of Species had inaugurated a new era in scientific thought. Prince Kropotkin, the Philosophical Anarchist, had, as a Russian exile living in England, published his *Mutual Aid as a Factor in Evolution*, and Karl Marx had found ammunition for the coming class war by burrowing among the books in the British Museum. William Morris, after spending years in designing furniture, wall papers, carpets and curtains, had come to regard "that sort of thing" to be "mostly rubbish" and had declared his preference for living with the "plainest white-washed walls and wooden chairs and tables".[1]

It was a fascinating era, tense with new ideas and anticipation of ever fresh possibilities—the period of the Femininist and Suffragist upheaval, the Theosophist movement, Socialist and Anarchist propaganda and of new currents in the Theatrical, Musical and Artistic worlds. The citadel of orthodox Christianity was crumbling under the assault of rationalist criticism; anthropology was shaking the structure of morality; science was undermining the bases of faith; and the onset of fresh discoveries was bringing about a dissolution of a number of what were hitherto regarded as "immutable laws" of nature. "The whole structure of civilization-morality," observed Edward Carpenter, "is being rapidly undermined. The moral aspects of Property, Commerce, Class-relations, Sex-relations, Marriage, Patriotism and so forth, are shifting like dissolving views. Nietzsche has scorched up the old Christian altruism; Bernard Shaw has burned the Decalogue."[2]

The awareness of the new forces that were at work in the social world all round and the rapidity of the resulting change had filled the atmosphere with a kind of messianic fervour of revolutionary anticipation. The contagion had caught all variety of people—from Mother Shipton to Hyndman. Mother Shipton's prophecy with its prognostication of self-propelled cars and flying machines ended with the words:

> And the world to an end shall come
> In the year eighteen hundred and eighty-one.

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Henry Meyers Hyndman—that "despot among democrats" and "democrat among despots"—with his usual exuberance, at every crisis in the industrial world, was confident that the revolution was round the corner and the millenium at hand. 1889, as the centenary of the first outbreak of the French Revolution, was to be the fateful date. When nothing happened in 1889, 1899, the last year of the century, was to be big with destiny. But 1899 only gave birth to the Boer War, the millenium did not arrive, nor did the world come to an end. The decade following 1881 did, however, in a sense, mark the end of the old world and the emergence of a new in its place. The inception in the year 1880-81 of Hyndman's Democratic Federation, Edmund Gurney's Society for Psychical Research, Mme Blavatsky's Theosophical Society, the Vegetarian Society and the Anti-Vivisection Society, connoted a break with the cocksureness and smug materialism of the mid-Victorian epoch.

It was in this world of widening horizons that Mohan found himself during the formative period of his life in the eighteen-eighties. A born experimenter with life, he showed little interest in the current academic theories and abstract speculations that filled his times. Instead, he plunged unawares, led by his affections, into some fundamental researches on his own. The triple vow that his mother had administered to him provided the guide rails. His ventures into vegetarianism, human relations and religion, the simplification of life, self-discipline and self-control were essentially a part of this fundamental research into the nature of the self, its power and the laws that govern it; in other words soul-force which was to be his tool of action in the struggle to come.

Socialism in its days of nonage in England was more an exuberant upsurge of the spirit in an adolescent than a body of scientific thought; it had not yet donned the sombre livery of a doctrinaire creed. The new order of society, which it envisaged through a nebulous golden haze, was like a Christmas tree. "Beneath the good fairy Equality, floating radiantly upon the topmost branch, it could be adorned with any theory, from Vegetarianism to Theosophy and anti-vivisection—all ornaments were welcome provided that . . . they were sufficiently glittering."[3]

The English Vegetarian Movement with which Mohan came in contact in the eighteen-eighties was part of a bigger movement of renaissance and idealism—the same that found expression in America in the Transcendentalism of Emerson, Thoreau and Walt Whitman. In America it was the spiritual condition mainly that was in disorder. The Apostles of Newness in New England were, therefore, more concerned with the soul. In England, it was the economic and social conditions that were at sixes and sevens. The search for a new way of life here took the form of a Nature and Humanitarian and Socialist movement. Side by side with the Thoreau Societies and Walt Whitman Groups, there grew up the Socialist League, the Sheffield Socialist Group and the Fellowship of New Life "for the peaceful regeneration of society by the cultivation

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of individual perfection", of which Ramsay Macdonald was a founder member, and from which the Fabian Society sprang. The leadership of the Vegetarian and Anti-Vivisection movements in England was drawn as much from the Thoreau Societies and Walt Whitman Groups as from among the Socialists and the Fabians. Vegetarianism was a part of their humanitarianism and humanitarianism of their Socialism. They were Socialists because they were humanitarians and because they were humanitarians they were also drawn into the ferment of the Vegetarian movement.

Gandhiji did not become acquainted with Thoreau's writings till 1907. Thoreau's thought, however, percolated down to him indirectly through the English vegetarians. The well from which he imbibed the philosophy of vegetarianism in the 'eighties was thus the one in which the buckets of both the East and the West had often dipped and grated together, and in which, in Thoreau's words, "the pure Walden water is (was) mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges".[4]

2

There is a perpetual see-saw going on within the mind of man between the opposite movements of conventionalism and idealism. When human spirit "staled by custom" and "shrunk by usage" loses its inner vitality, it seeks to make up for its loss by an outward appearance of power; it surrounds itself with impressive externalities—material comforts, show of wealth, conventions in manners and dress, a stereotyped code of morals based on tradition rather than ethics, and finally a philosophy and religion adapted to its convenience. But the emptiness of it soon begins to pall and the instinct of survival sets up a reaction. It takes the form of a "renaissance of wonder", search for what Thoreau called the "everlasting Something", that would restore to it the inner springs of vitality that have dried up. In America this was embodied in the Transcendentalist movement.

The Transcendentalism of New England was the result, among other things, of the quickening of the American mind by the impact of Indian Vedantist thought that found expression in Emerson's famed invocation to Brahma:

If the red slayer thinks he slays,
Or if the slain thinks he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

* * *

They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I the hymn that Brahman sings.

The return to nature of the Transcendentalists was the recoil from polite artificiality and a philosophy of sense. Meaning, to begin with,

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"a little more than a sort of prolonged and delectable picnic", it developed into a quest after "a new faith and a new dealing with life"—an effort to escape out of a circle of arbitrary and paralysing ideas, and find release into the infinite possibilities that lie within us, without us and beyond.

All these trends of the Transcendental movement met in the person of Henry David Thoreau, who was Emerson's neighbour from 1837 to 1862. In 1845 he launched on an experiment in the simple life and "peace of independence", borrowed an axe from his friend Amos Bronson Alcott, built himself a hut of white-pine timber by the side of Walden Pond, and on Independence Day moved into it. He lived there all by himself and by his body labour alone for two years from July 4, 1845, to September 6, 1847, and in 1854 gave in his *Walden* an account of his experiment.

This book and *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* present, in a nutshell, the practical philosophy of rebellion against the world's artificial, cowardly, ineffective way of living that threatens civilisation with the "tragedy of mediocrity".

In the *Week*, in a passage that has become famous, Thoreau has described how this conversion to vegetarianism came about:

> The carcasses of some poor squirrels, however, the same that frisked so merrily in the morning, which we had skinned and embowelled for our dinner, we abandoned in disgust . . . as too wretched a resource for any but starving men. . . . If they had been larger, our crime had been less. Their small red bodies, little bundles of red tissue, mere gobbets of venison, would not have 'fattened fire'. With a sudden impulse we threw them away, and washed our hands, and boiled some rice for our dinner. 'Behold the difference between the one who eateth flesh and him to whom it belonged! The first hath a momentary enjoyment, whilst the latter is deprived of existence!' 'Who would commit so great a crime against a poor animal, who is fed only by the herbs which grow wild in the woods, and whose belly is burnt up with hunger?'[5]

He had during the years carried a gun. "My excuse was that I was studying ornithology." But as his communion with nature deepened, he began to feel that there was a finer way of studying ornithology than this, if only because it required "so much closer attention to the habits of the birds".[6] Accordingly, before he moved into his new hut, he sold his gun and began to practise abstinence from flesh foods as a superior and more civilised way of living. "Who hears when the fishes cry?" he asks in *Walden*. Elsewhere in the same book, he writes: "No humane being, past the thoughtless age of boyhood, will wantonly murder any creature which holds its life by the same tenure that he does. The hare in its extremity cries like a child."[7]

His abstemiousness and giving up of animal food were no ascetic denial of life, but the result of heightened aesthetic sensitivity due to growing attunement with Nature. He chose to live simply because he

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wanted to live deep, to suck out all the marrow of life. "He who distinguishes the true savour of his food can never be a glutton; he who does not cannot be otherwise. . . .Not that food which entereth into the mouth defileth a man, but the appetite with which it is eaten. It is neither the quality nor the quantity, but the devotion to sensual savours; when that which is eaten is not a viand to sustain our animal, or inspire our spiritual life, but food for the worms that possess us."

Reasoning on these lines, he declared that it was not compatible with man's high estate to continue to live by preying on other animals. True, once men did live like that.

> But this is a miserable way. . . . Till this is otherwise, we are not civilized, and . . . he will be regarded as a benefactor of his race who shall teach man to confine himself to a more innocent and wholesome diet. Whatever my own practice may be, I have no doubt that it is a part of the destiny of the human race, in its gradual improvement, to leave off eating animals as surely as the savage tribes have left off eating each other when they came in contact with the more civilized.[8]

He was a voracious and omnivorous reader with an open mind, ready to receive wisdom from any quarter. In 1854 he got Thomas Cholmondeley, the Englishman, nephew of Bishop Reginald Heber of India fame, after a visit to Concord to send him from England a collection of 44 Indian classics, which were practically impossible to obtain at that time in America. "That age will be rich indeed. . .," he prophesied, "when the Vaticans shall be filled with *Vedas* and *Zendavestas* and Bibles, with Homers and Dantes and Shakespeares. . . .By such a pile we may hope to scale Heaven at last."[9] The motto he adopted was "*Ex Oriente Lux*".

His own writings are replete with references to the Indian scriptures and classics. The chapter "Monday" in his *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* is a glowing rhapsody on the *Gita* and of the great poems and philosophies of India: "In comparison with the philosophers of the East, we may say that modern Europe has yet given birth to none. Beside the vast and cosmogonal philosophy of the *Bhagavad Gita*, even our Shakespeare seems sometimes youthfully green and practical merely."[10]

Referring to the Laws of Manu, he writes in *Walden:* "The Hindoo Law Giver . . . teaches how to eat." Again, in the same book, he observes: "As our domestic fowls are said to have their original in the wild pheasants of India, so our domestic thoughts have their prototypes in the thoughts of her philosophers." Baptised a Unitarian, he developed a Vedantist point of view. There is no doubt, remarks an English researcher, Roy Walker, in a monograph on him, that Thoreau "found instructions on 'how to eat' in his studies of Indian scriptures and classics. . . .He derived from his study of Eastern scriptures the sense of the oneness of all life, that is the basis of the vegetarian ethic among the great populations of Asia."[11]

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The vegetarian movement in America has been traced back to the labours of one Englishman—the Rev. William Metcalfe, of the British Christian Church in England, who, with another minister and thirty-nine vegetarian "Pilgrim fathers", emigrated to America in 1817, the year in which Thoreau was born. He wrote the first vegetarian tract in the United States, founded the American Vegetarian Society, of which he was the president towards the end, and edited *The American Vegetarian*. His essay on "Abstinence from the Flesh of Animals" did not arouse much interest. But he persevered, through years of poverty and ridicule, till in 1830 he converted Sylvester Graham and Dr. William A. Alcott, who anticipated Thoreau also in the non-payment of taxes, to vegetarianism. Dr. Alcott converted in 1835 his whole family. His cousin Amos Bronson Alcott of Concord became Thoreau's friend and exemplar.

From America the vegetarian movement travelled back, much invigorated by the cross-fertilisation, to England, where it found such exponents as Edward Carpenter and Henry Salt, Bernard Shaw and Howard Williams, Edward Maitland, Anna Kingsford and Annie Besant.

3

The English Vegetarians were a motley group. Edward Carpenter was a Socialist and Humanitarian. So was Henry Salt. Bernard Shaw was a Fabian, Annie Besant a Theosophist and a Fabian, and Howard Williams a rationalist. Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland were mystics.

The high priest of a new way of life in England was Edward Carpenter—an ex-curate and a former Fellow of the Trinity Hall, Cambridge. Grandson of an admiral and son of a retired barrister, he was born and brought up in a comfortable upper middle class Brighton family. He went to Brighton College and was in due course ordained, but found himself out of tune with his surroundings. Under the influence of Walt Whitman's poems and Thoreau's *Walden*, he was drawn into socialism, gave up the church and became a University Extension Lecturer. His health broke down under the strain and he went to America, where he met Walt Whitman, Emerson and others of their group. He resigned this lecturing appointment and became an experimenter with life; gave up meat-eating; took to wearing sandals, which an English friend of his, Harold Cox—who was for some time in the Anglo-Mohammedan College at Aligarh—had on request sent to him from Kashmir, began to make them for sale, and to live the simple life in a country cottage at Millthorpe.

Reading the *Bhagavad Gita* had a profound effect on his thinking. He saw in the doctrine of the Self immense possibilities of practical application in achieving racial harmony, the gradual evolution of a Stateless society, the communal ownership and use of Land and Capital, the emancipation of women, the equality of the sexes and the sturdy simplification and "debarrassment of daily life by the removal of those

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things which stand between us and Nature, between ourselves and our fellows—by plain living, friendship with animals, open-air habits, fruitarian food, and such degree of nudity as we can reasonably attain to." Anyone of them, if worked out with all its implications, "would be fatal to most of our existing institutions. Together, they would form a revolution so great that to call it a mere extension or outgrowth of civilisation would be quite inadequate."[12]

He shared the faith of the American Concord Circle that redemption of mankind could come by a return to that "vital perfection" which, he held, animated the human race in the period of pre-civilisation. After a visit to Ceylon and India he began to be interested in Eastern mysticism.

In 1887, he founded the Sheffield Socialist Group. Among those who were actively associated with it were Hyndman, Kropotkin and Mrs Annie Besant. "A compendium of Cranks", as a wit called them, they organised lectures, addresses, pamphlets and street corner programmes, which led to occasional brushes with the police. They hired a large house and shop in Scotland Street, a poor district of the town, and opened a cafe; used the house for a joint residence for the workers, and the large room above for lectures, meetings, and all sorts of social gatherings. Teas and entertainments were provided for the working men and their children, the wives and sisters of the "comrades" helping, especially in social work. His paper, *Civilization, Its Cause and Cure*, which he read to the Fabian Society, did not find favour with Bernard Shaw and the Webbs, as the early Fabians were not interested in "cranky theories about nature". They wanted to confine themselves to economic issues. But his critical examination of the pretensions of science and his plea for a new order of society in close touch with nature appealed strongly later to Gandhiji, who cited his thesis as one of his authorities in his *Indian Home Rule*.

Congratulations poured in upon him from all parts of the world on attaining his seventieth birthday in 1914. Among the signatories to the congratulatory letter that he received on that occasion was the Poet Rabindranath Tagore. He died in 1929, the news of his death being conveyed to Gandhiji by Henry Salt.[13]

A few years younger than Carpenter, Henry Salt was the son of a British military officer in the Indian Army, who had the habit of referring to Indians as "niggers". Born in Naini Tal (India) in 1851, he was brought up by his mother in England after his parents had separated. She was a conventional woman with stereotyped ideas on social inequality.

"Why are some people very rich and others poor?" her little son asked her one day.

She answered: "That's how the world is ordered. The rich have got rich through saving and the poor have got poor through drinking."

The boy, however, writes his biographer Winsten, "did not see much saving among the rich boys about him, and the drinking that

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went on was not by the poor."[14] He became a humanitarian first and last.

Under the influence of Jim Joynes, son of an Eton housemaster, who had been Swinburne's tutor at Cambridge, he was drawn into the ferment of socialism. The two young men, after a brilliant academic career at Cambridge, at the request of their Eton headmaster, returned to Eton to teach. But when Salt took to vegetarianisn, he was asked, as he narrated at a meeting of the London vegetarians where Gandhiji was present, by Eton authorities to quit. On reading a statement by Edward Carpenter in one of his publications that it was possible to live in simple style in a country hut on £160 a year, he shook the dust of Eton off his feet, married his friend's sister, Kate Joynes, and the two settled down to live the simple life in a country cottage at Tilford. Like Carpenter they wore sandals and did their own house work. The sandals were "the symbol of liberation". Wearing them, they felt they were "treading on holy ground".

Besides love of nature and liberation, Salt had a passion for social reform. With Edward Maitland and Howard Williams, he founded the Humanitarian League, which had the support among others of Annie Besant and Sydney Olivier, and carried on by writing pamphlets an unceasing crusade against killing for sport, vivisection and inhuman conditions in shops, factories and prisons and other social evils. His book on vegetarianism, that so profoundly influenced Mohan, brought him many appreciatory letters, among them one by Count Leo Tolstoy.

An intimate friend of Bernard Shaw, Sydney Olivier and Ramsay Macdonald, Salt unlike them refused to divide his allegiance to the cause of vegetarianism and humanitarianism with any other. Later, when they rose to positions of eminence and power in their own country, he became the link between them and one of his earliest converts to vegetarianism —the lad Gandhi of the 'eighties, now the Mahatma, whose meteoric career he had as a fellow-vegetarian followed with growing interest, admiration and pride.

A class by itself, among the organisations working for the advent of a new world order was the Hermetic Society, consisting practically of two persons, Edward Maitland and Anna Kingsford. Edward Maitland, the nephew of Sir Peregrine Maitland, one time Governor of the Cape Colony, was born in 1824. After graduating from Cambridge in 1847, he went to California and from there to Australia, where he became the Commissioner for Crown Lands. Of a cool and intellectual temperament he was gifted with a resourceful, original mind and was well read in literature and science. Returning to England in 1857, he became a mystic and devoted himself to literature in the attempt to find a spiritual basis of life. He wrote three romances.

It was one of these, *By and By*, that brought him into touch with Anna Kingsford—the vegetarian and anti-vivisectionist. Tall, slender and

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graceful in form, she added to a good medical training which she had received in the Schools of Paris, a fair knowledge of Greek and Latin and considerable literary ability. Like Maitland she was a mystic. For fourteen years till she died, Edward Maitland and she carried on a strong crusade in favour of Vegetarianism and against vivisection. They published, besides, a series of books—*The Perfect Way, Clothed With the Sun, The Virgin of the World.* Their vegetarianism was a part of their mysticism. Among the books on vegetarianism that influenced Mohandas Gandhi during his student days in London was Anna Kingsford's *The Perfect Way in Diet.*

After Anna Kingsford's death in 1888, Maitland wrote several books, including *The New Gospel of Interpretation* in which he stated that he had been inspired by her, and in 1891, founded the Esoteric Christian Union, with its motto: "There is no other religion so high as love." The object of the Union, or Brotherhood, was to propagate the "perfect doctrine of existence and rule of life", originally communicated by "the Church Celestial" to "the Church Terrestrial" and corrupted by the latter. Later, in South Africa, Mohandas, as "M. K. Gandhi, Attorney", came in contact with the Esoteric Christian Brotherhood and became interested in its activities. But of that more hereafter.

4

Two irresistible attractions of the Vegetarian Restaurant in Farringdon Street which Mohan frequented were the afternoon teas and celebrities. "People would go miles," writes Winsten, "to see a celebrity munching cake and they would go twice as far to sit beside a celebrity over a cup of tea and hear him oraculate." Salt used to arrange such tea parties,

> And in the very early days, an Indian in silk hat and black coat, walked in, . . . sat among very affable and talkative people and asked where he could get dancing lessons. . . . Salt was kindness and understanding itself. 'My name is Gandhi,' he told them, 'You have, of course, never heard of it.' Salt made a note of a possible new member. Years went by and the name was forgotten.[15]

The silk-hatted black-coated Indian, however, forgot nothing. Unobserved himself but keenly observant, he kept careful mental note of all that passed at the tables of his fellow vegetarians around him. Years afterwards he recalled before a gathering of vegetarians in London what he had heard and seen those days: "They had a habit of talking of nothing but food and nothing but disease". This was the "worst way of going about the business". It was, he had further found, just those vegetarians who were suffering from some disease or other and had taken to vegetarianism from purely health point of view, who were finding it difficult to

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stick to their vegetarianism. They made of food a fetish. Several of them thought that by becoming vegetarians they could "eat as much lentils, haricot beans and cheese as they liked." No wonder they could not maintain health. To keep health, one had to "eat sparingly and now and then fast. No man or woman really ate . . . just that quantity which the body requires and no more."[16]

Here he learnt about the existence of the Vegetarian Society of Manchester, but beyond occasionally reading its journal, *The Vegetarian Messenger*, for a long time took not much interest in it. Early in 1890, he came to know of *The Vegetarian*, the journal of the London Vegetarian Society (L.V.S.) of which Josiah Oldfield was the editor. In the latter half of that year at an International Vegetarian Conference he met Dr Oldfield, who had heard about him and the story of his triple vow from their common friend, Dr P. J. Mehta, and had as a fellow vegetarian felt strongly drawn to him. It was he who had asked him to attend the Conference in question. The acquaintance thus formed ripened into a life-long friendship.

In the summer of 1890 Mohan was inducted into the L.V.S. He began to subscribe to its journal, and to take active interest in the vegetarian movement. He read, besides Salt's and Anna Kingsford's books, Howard Williams' *The Ethics of Diet*, and writings on health and hygiene of Dr T. A. Allinson, the advocate of open-air life and dietetic way of cure, who prescribed to his patients strictly vegetarian diet.

A shrewd judge of character, and a bit of a crusader, Dr Oldfield found in the shy, diffident, frail-looking new recruit to the L.V.S. a tenacity, will-power and devotion to ideals rarely equalled. A richer catch for the cause of vegetarianism was hardly likely to come his way. On September 19, 1890, he had him selected to the Executive Committee of the London Vegetarian Society. Mohan attended its meetings on October 3 and October 31, but took no part in the proceedings, of which there is record, till February following, when a moral issue came up and galvanised him. It was not that he never felt tempted to speak, but he was always at a loss to know how to express himself. "All the rest of the members appeared to me to be better informed than I. Then it often happened that just when I mustered up courage to speak, a fresh subject would be started. This went on for a long time."[17]

As a member of the Executive Committee of the London Vegetarian Society, he came in contact with all the "pillars of vegetarianism". Reading of vegetarian literature aroused in him an interest in dietetics, and he started making experiments in it on his own. Once he tried living on bread and fruit alone. He stopped sending for sweets and other eatables from home, and began to take frugal, plain-cooked food. To his agreeable surprise he found that with the change in his outlook, he ate with relish even boiled vegetables, cooked without condiments, that he had

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found so trying before. "Many such experiments taught me that the real seat of the taste was not the tongue but the mind."[18]

Every nascent idealistic movement has its share of enthusiasts, faddists and cranks. The English vegetarian movement was no exception to it. There were several divisions among the vegetarians. One class defined meat to denote the flesh of birds and beasts only. They held it permissible to eat fish and eggs. Others included in the definition of meat flesh of all living beings. They excluded fish from their dietary. Their vegetarianism meant the "V.E.M." diet, i.e., diet consisting of vegetables, eggs and milk. According to the definition of the London Vegetarian Society, a vegetarian was one who lived on the "kindly fruits of the Earth", "fruit of the fowls", and "fruit of kine". Still others included in the definition of meat not only the flesh of all living beings but their products also. They abjured milk, butter and cheese—not to mention meat, fish or eggs.

Some vegetarian writers on diet reforms laid great emphasis on the exclusion of all starch, though some others like H. S. Salt felt that their emphasis was misplaced. Those who were raising objections to the use of starch in food "should instead make their protest against the starch which is put into our collars and shirts"![19] The advocates of starchless diet spoke highly of a regimen of eggs, milk and cheese. They argued that eggs were not meat as eating of eggs involved no injury to any living being. Under Dr Oldfield's advice Mohan began to experiment with eggs as a part of the starchless diet. This, he persuaded himself, was no breach of his vow of abstention from meat. But his conscience smote him. This, surely, was not the sense in which his mother understood his vow when she gave her consent to his going to England. He gave up taking eggs. The experiment lasted nearly a month and a half. "The golden rule," his experience taught him, "is to accept the interpretation honestly put on the pledge by the party administering it."[20] To do otherwise is to open loop-holes for self-deception and to play fast and loose with truth.

Giving up of eggs proved somewhat annoying at first, as he had begun to like some dishes in which eggs were used. The difficulty, however, proved to be temporary only. "The strict observance of the vow produced an inward relish distinctly more healthy, delicate and permanent."[21]

Finding that some writers on health had condemned the use of tea and coffee as injurious and spoke favourably of cocoa, he gave up taking tea and coffee and substituted cocoa in their place. Many years afterwards he learnt that cocoa was the product of "slave labour". He then gave up taking cocoa also. But for the time being, his experiments in dietetics were by and large based on the ground of economy and hygiene. This proved to be a shaky basis. Before long he resumed taking tea.

He found that similar had been the experience of many of his fellow vegetarians too. After the pattern set by its high-priests, Thoreau and

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Edward Carpenter, neither of whom wholly abjured meat, the English Vegetarian Movement had rested largely on a pragmatic basis, when its basis was not individualistic. The movement had in consequence lacked fire. Speaking on November 10, 1931, before a gathering of vegetarians arranged by the London Vegetarian Society, where he was the chief guest, he presented to them the moral. Vegetarianism had not made greater headway among them because the practice of those who professed it was weak. And their practice was weak because their basis was inadequate. For remaining staunch to vegetarianism, a man required a moral basis:

> For me that was a great discovery in my search after truth. . . . I found that a selfish basis would not serve the purpose of taking a man higher and higher along the path of evolution. What was required was an altruistic purpose.[22]

He had noticed, too, that health was by no means the monopoly of vegetarians. "Non-vegetarians were able to show, generally speaking, good health." Vegetarians had need to be tolerant, to adopt a little humility and appeal to the moral sense of the people who did not see eye to eye with them, if they wanted to convert others to vegetarianism.

> We have vegetarians in the cow and the bull—which are better vegetarians than we are—but there is something much higher which calls us to vegetarianism. . . . Man is more than meat. It is the spirit in man for which we are concerned. Vegetarians should, therefore, have that moral basis—that a man was not born to be a carnivorous animal, but born to live on the fruits and herbs that the earth grows. . . . Therefore, I think that what vegetarians should do is not to emphasize the physical consequences of vegetarianism, but to explore the moral consequences.[23]

He was no vegetarian who, if and when he became ill and the doctors prescribed to him beef-tea, could not stick to his vegetarianism. Vegetarianism had to be made of sterner stuff. "If anybody said that I should die if I did not take beef-tea or mutton even under medical advice, I would prefer death. That is the basis of my vegetarianism."[24]

5

"The simple life" was very much in the air in the England of the eighteen-eighties. Edward Carpenter, who was known in his circle as the "English Thoreau", had said there were two ways of amassing wealth; one by getting a sufficient amount of money, the other by reducing one's needs on the principle that a man is rich in proportion to the number of things he can do without. Under the influence of his writings, a number of attempts to establish land communities after the manner of Brook Farm in America were made in England. They failed. But the cult of the simple

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life came to stay. Enthusiastic young men threw up secure jobs to live by physical labour in close touch with nature.

Besides these pioneers of the Nature movement there were others who adopted a life of simplicity for reasons of frugality. Some Irish M.P.s lived in London on one pound a week. Among them was Joe Biggar, the well-known Parnellite. Still some others took to the simple life because the humanitarian service of the poor in which they were engaged called for self-sacrifice and self-denial on their part.

Charles Bradlaugh was one such. Beginning life on 10s a week, he sold everything he possessed except his books, "his home that he had got together by hard work, his furniture, even a diamond ring given him by a grateful friend, whom he had helped." His wife, unable to bear the life he faced, went to live with her family in the country. He lived in two small rooms in Turner Street, Whitechapel, for which he paid 13s 6d a week.

Cardinal Manning did not spend on food more than nine shillings a week. There was a book published about this time entitled *How to Live on one Pound a Week.* Dr Nichols, an American who emigrated to England in his middle age and wrote several books—*Eating to Live, The Diet Cure* (1877), *Dr Nichols' Penny Vegetarian Cookery* (1884) and *Health Manual* (1887)—spent only 3s 6d per week on his food. He wrote a book in 1879, *How to Live Well on Sixpence a Day.*

An Indian gentleman had tried to limit the expense on his food to one shilling a week. He also wrote a book on the subject. A judge from the Punjab, who had gone to England on furlough for a barrister's education, while Gandhiji was there, lived on fifty rupees per month. He had brought with him his son also. Out of his monthly income of Rs. 150/-, he used to set apart Rs. 50/- for his wife at home while he and his son spent only rupees 50/- each upon themselves or £3-1/5 per month. Still another Gujarati gentleman, who had gone to England for medical studies, was living on less than 10s per week.

With all these examples before him, and the simple life as much the topic of the day among the pioneers of the new way of life as the philosophy of vegetarianism itself, Mohan felt an urge to simplify his life still further. His four-week holiday at Brighton, after his matriculation examination, provided him with the opportunity. He planned he would hire a room, cook the morning and evening meals himself and have the midday meal outside. As he was not to do much reading during his vacation, this would enable him to combine rest with research in the new way of life.

At Brighton, however, no landlady would rent him a room on those conditions. They were all afraid that the rooms would be spoiled if he did his cooking inside. One of them even said that she could not give him the room "even for 20s. The whole carpet would be spoiled by stains of grease and no one else after you leave would take my room."[25] On his explaining to her, however, that he wanted only to prepare his porridge

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and boil the milk and that if her carpet was spoiled, he would compensate her for the damage, she agreed to rent her rooms for 8s per week.

Leaving his luggage in the room he went out in search of a vegetarian restaurant of which he had heard. But he could not find it and no restaurant keeper would engage to provide him a dinner consisting of vegetable soup, fruit, bread and butter for one shilling.

> They all said they could not undergo the bother just for one man. I felt very depressed. I thought my experiment would fail. . . . The task was hopeless. . . . I would be obliged to pay 2s or 3s merely for a dinner. I was quite tired by this time and very hungry but I did not give up. . . . I said to myself . . . if I could cook two meals why not . . . three.[26]

With this thought he went to a grocer's and bought the provisions and other necessary things. But when on reaching the house he told the landlady that although the arrangement was to allow him to cook two meals only, he would have to cook three, she flared up and "would have driven me out of the house had I not offered to raise rent from 8s to 10s." The offer of higher rent mollified her and he set to work. The first evening he prepared porridge and stewed fruit. The next morning he had the same. The haricot soup that he had for dinner proved to be "very nourishing and nice". The cooking did not take much time. The breakfast took only 10 minutes to prepare, the supper nearly 20 minutes, and the dinner one hour. For the following four weeks

> For breakfast I had bread and milk and stewed fruit and bread and butter (3d); for dinner I had soup (1½d), strawberries (2d) and bread (1d). For supper I had porridge (1½d) and bread and butter and fruit (2d). Thus I spent only 11d or 1 shilling per day at the most for food in Brighton.[27]

With the 10s for rent and 3s for washing, the whole of the expenses for board and lodging for four weeks amounted to £ 3.10.0. Inclusive of fare, his four weeks' holiday in Brighton and return did not cost him more than four pounds.

Encouraged by the success of his Brighton experiment, he, on reaching London, hired a bed-sitting room in Tavistock Street for 8s a week. He cooked his breakfast and supper and dined outside, "the landlady supplying the plates, spoons and knife, etc." The breakfast almost always consisted of porridge and stewed fruit and bread and butter (3d). He dined for 6d at one of the many vegetarian restaurants and for supper had bread and milk and some stewed fruit or radishes or fresh fruit (3d). "So then the expense for board and lodging in England were during the last nine months of my stay, only 15s a week and 14s latterly when in the same house I took up a 7s room."[28]

Throughout his stay in England, he never lost a penny or spent a farthing of which he had not kept account. The only exception was when he once purchased from a grocer for a penny an apple for his supper

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and forgot to ask for the balance on the twopenny piece that he had handed in. On his way back he remembered and went back to the grocer to collect it. "The grocer of course pretended to know nothing about it. I blamed myself for my negligence and learnt to be more careful in future."

His experiment in plain living filled him with a sense of achievement and added self-confidence. No one should think, he writes in his Autobiography, that this made life "a dreary business. On the contrary, the change harmonised my inward and outward life. . . . My life was certainly more truthful and my soul knew no bounds of joy."

In June, 1890, he again appeared for his matriculation examination. This time he was successful. He had to work hard—if not the hardest, during this period and the period that followed, particularly the last five months before his Bar Final. But thanks to his simple living and long walks, he enjoyed the best of health. "I used to walk about 8 miles every day and in all I had three walks daily—once when I went out for lunch, one in the evening at 5-30 p.m. for one hour, and the other always for 30 or 45 minutes before going to bed. . . . Even the coldest weather or the densest fog did not prevent me from having my usual walks."[29]

Only once did he fall ill. This was when, owing to overwork and neglect of exercise, while preparing for his examination, he was laid up with an attack of bronchitis. He went for consultation to a doctor, who told him, that he would have to take beef-tea and meat, if he wished to get cured. "I asked the doctor whether he was sure that I would die if I did not eat meat. He assured me, on his honour as a physician and from the experience of the whole medical profession, that people could not live in England without meat. . . . In the cold climate of England the addition of beef and mutton was essential.

"I asked him to give me time till the next day to think it out. He came next morning with a cup of steaming hot beef-tea in his hand and said: 'Come along my laddie, and be sensible and drink down this strengthening food.'

"I looked up into his face and said, 'Tell me once more, if it is necessary that I should do this, and that if I did not I shall die.'

"He looked at me earnestly and said, 'You must either take beef-tea or die.' "

"And what happened then?" Dr Oldfield asked him when he went to consult him about his diet.

"I had to reply that if it were God's will that I should die, I must die, but that I was sure it could not be God's will that I should break the oath that I made at my mother's knee before I left India."

"Within a few years," Dr Oldfield relates, "this doctor was dead but Gandhi lived to move the world by his heroism."[30]

Thereafter they met each other frequently. He got rid of his illness without any medicine. "Under the advice of Dr Allinson . . . I used to keep my bedroom windows open about 4 inches in all weathers. This

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is not generally done by people in winter but . . . it agreed with me very well."[31]

6

The constitutional shyness with which Mohan was afflicted in his early days continued seriously to handicap him throughout his stay in England. The presence of even a few strangers froze him. But although it caused him many a heartbreak at that time, in retrospect he prized it as a valuable asset that had saved him from many a snare and pitfall. Like many Indian students in London those days he had, for the sake of companionship, passed himself off as a bachelor and concealed the fact of his marriage. At Osborne House in Ventnor a Miss Shelton,[32] the daughter of his landlady, used sometimes to take him out for a walk. But all her efforts to draw him out—her rhapsodies on the loveliness of the scene around, her gibes, her sallies of wit, even her challenge to outpace her in walking, or to overtake her in hill-climbing—were lost on him. All she could get out of him was an embarrassed monosyllabic "Yes" or "No". He would have lacked courage even to pick up a scented handkerchief deliberately dropped to him. His fair friend shrieked with delight at his awkwardness. To her, all this was perfectly natural and innocent — a part of the normal healthy English social life. But brought up as he was in a different social environment, he felt humiliated, and mortified. He cursed his "backwardness" and his rank "cowardice". But there was no help. So he consoled himself with the thought that he would live "to fight another day".

During his stay in Brighton, one day while going about in search of a vegetarian restaurant, he met an "old English widow of moderate means" in a hotel. A good-hearted woman, she saw he was new to the place. The menu card was printed in French. He was struggling to spell through it and seemed lost. She began to take a kindly interest in him. Soon they became friends. She gave him a standing invitation to dine with her every Sunday when he would return to London. It had a strange sequel.

On his return to London, availing himself of her invitation, he began to visit her home on Sundays. She was all kindness. To help him overcome his bashfulness, she introduced him to a number of young eligible girls of her acquaintance. He found it to be a sore trial to begin with. He felt tongue-tied in their presence. But gradually his awkwardness and reserve wore off, and he even began to look forward with eagerness to his Sunday visits and the pleasant company at the old lady's. Pleased with her success and the progress the young man had made under her chaperonage, she began to "spread her net" wider and wider, increased the opportunities and started leaving him alone with one of her young proteges, in whose future she was keenly interested.

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Perhaps she thought it would be a good thing if the two got engaged. Mohan had never intended to let matters go so far. He saw the peril. Retreat seemed difficult. But both his commonsense and conscience told him it was time to cry halt. So summoning up all his courage he penned a letter, making a clean breast of it to the old lady. He told her that he had dissembled the fact of his marriage and asked her forgiveness. "I assure you I have taken no improper liberties with the young lady. . . . If on receipt of this you feel that I have been unworthy of your hospitality, I assure you I shall not take it amiss. . . . If, after this, you . . . continue to regard me as worthy of your hospitality . . . I shall . . . count it a further token of your kindness."[33]

Prompt came the good lady's reply, saying that he was already forgiven, and inviting him next Sunday to come as before, when "we shall . . . look forward to hearing all about your child marriage and to the pleasure of laughing at your expense." The letter relieved him of a great burden. "I thus purged myself," he says in his Autobiography, "of the canker of untruth".[34] Long after his shyness had become a thing of the past, he wrote:

> My hesitancy in speech, which was once an annoyance, is now a pleasure . . . it has taught me the economy of words. . . . Experience has taught me that silence is part of the spiritual discipline of a votary of truth. Proneness to exaggerate, to suppress or modify the truth, wittingly or unwittingly, is a natural weakness of man, and silence is necessary in order to surmount it. . . . My shyness has been in reality my shield and buckler. It has allowed me to grow. It has helped me in my discernment of truth.[35]

On one occasion, his "shield" failed him. He had then to go through the purgatory.

7

The medley of beliefs that the English vegetarians of the 'eighties represented made sometimes a strange brew. In Edward Carpenter's writings, for instance, vegetarianism went hand in hand with his defence of homosexuality and his theories about Nature and Love; Kate Joynes (Mrs Henry Salt) combined with her love of Sanskrit studies and vegetarianism a strain of Lesbianism. She had accepted Edward Carpenter's views on homosexuality and claimed to be a Urning. Many humanitarians and vegetarians were enthusiastic supporters of modern birth-control methods. The Malthusian Law of Population and its corollary, the Iron Law of Wages, held the field. According to it, it was no use trying to ameliorate the conditions of the working class, as increased prosperity would only result in a higher birth rate, which would again bring down their standard of living to the subsistence level. And since the Malthusian Law was supposed to be like nature's laws infallible and

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inviolable, the only choice before the humanitarians was either to accept permanent penury and degradation of the working class as an irrevocable decree of nature, or to adopt the philosophy of birth-control. Many notable humanitarians had in consequence dared to risk unpopularity and even prosecution in their advocacy of modern birth-control methods. Bradlaugh and Annie Besant had invited upon themselves the penalty of law by aggressively publishing a tract on the subject, *Fruits of Philosophy*, after a law-court had convicted the original publisher for "selling a work full of indecent physiological details".[36] Dr T. A. Allinson, the eminent dietetician and naturopath and one of the most distinguished members of the London Vegetarian Society, was another pioneer of modern birth-control methods. His campaign had outraged the sense of morality of the mid-Victorian era, and he was regarded by the orthodox almost as the "Devil Incarnate".

Mr Hills, Manager of the Thames Iron Works and the President of the London Vegetarian Society, was a successful industrialist. He was also its main financial prop. Like many successful businessmen of his day, he was a puritan in his views regarding sex. In February of 1891, he put forward a resolution to dissociate the London Vegetarian Society from Dr Allinson's activities. The resolution condemned "the doctor's deadly poison of licensed immorality conveyed in the teaching of protective checks and artificial prevention to conception."[37] Mohan shared Hills's moral revulsion to birth-control by artificial methods. But he had the highest regard for Dr Allinson's sincerity, and felt strongly that even the devil must have his due. "I thought it was quite improper to exclude a man from a vegetarian society simply because he refused to regard puritan morals as one of the objects of the society." The object of the society being "simply the promotion of vegetarianism and not of any system of morality", Dr Allinson had as much right as any vegetarian to be a member of the society "irrespective of his views on other morals".[38]

He wrote out his views on a piece of paper. But in the meeting his presence of mind deserted him utterly and the president had to have his note read by some one else. "Dr Allinson lost the day," he says in his Autobiography, "I have a faint recollection that after this incident I resigned from the Committee."

London Vegetarian Society's records, however, show that he did not resign from the Executive Committee of the Society at least on this occasion. The entry in the Minute Book referring to this episode records that "after some discussion Mr Hills withdrew the motion". It may however be, it has been suggested, that Mr Hills made it plain to all concerned that while he was prepared to withdraw a formal resolution of condemnation, the Society might not count upon his continued support and its existence was at stake as long as it continued to tolerate advocates of birth-control like Dr Allinson in its midst.[39]

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Be it as it may, Mohan with a tenacity that characterised him, where truth was concerned, did not allow the matter to rest there. In the meeting of the Executive Committee of the London Vegetarian Society of April 10 he moved a resolution: "That in order that all may work with a clear conscience it is necessary that the Committee do define Vegetarianism so far as the London Vegetarian Society is concerned and decide what it shall include." The resolution was adopted. Thereafter he attended the Committee meetings on April 17 and on May 1, when he "seconded a vote of thanks to Dr Head for chairing a debate". There was one more meeting of the Committee in June prior to his departure. This he did not attend. It is quite possible that though the resolution that he had moved was adopted it was not implemented to his satisfaction and he then tendered his resignation, which may or may not have been put up before the Committee as he shortly afterwards left England for good. He, however, had "comfort in the thought", he says, that the cause was right, and that "in the very first battle of its kind", he had sided with the losing party. To side with the losing party in a cause that appeared just in his eyes became a settled trait of his character.

8

Mohan was eager to visit the Great Exhibition that had opened in Paris on May 5, 1899. To round off his education abroad, he crossed the channel and made a dash to Paris. He had heard of a vegetarian restaurant there. Hiring a room he stayed there seven days, doing most of the sightseeing on foot with a guide map.

He was deeply impressed by the beautiful sculpture and the elaborate interior decoration of Notre Dame and the grandeur and peacefulness of the ancient churches of Paris. "I felt then that those who expended millions on such divine cathedrals could not but have the love of God in their hearts." He was equally struck by the attitude of rapt devotion of the common folk kneeling before the image of Virgin. He was sure, they "could not be worshipping mere marble. . . . They were fired with genuine devotion and they worshipped not stone, but the divinity of which it was symbolic."[40]

One of the chief attractions of the Exhibition was the Eiffel Tower. This pile of iron, rising to a height of one thousand feet, and hailed by many as the symbol of the modern age, had in fact nothing to recommend itself except that it was considered to be the tallest structure then thought possible in the world. Mohan in his exuberance, climbed it more than once, and even "threw away" seven good shillings on a lunch in the restaurant on its first platform. He subsequently described it as the "toy of the Exhibition" and "a good demonstration of the fact that we are all children attracted by trinkets", concurring with Tolstoy's

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judgment that the Tower was a monument not of man's triumph but of man's folly that could have been perpetrated only under the subtle narcotic effect of tobacco fumes. This is the earliest reference by Gandhiji, of which there is record, to the great Russian writer and philosopher who was so profoundly to influence him.

After his visit to Paris Mohan plunged into his studies once more and began feverishly to prepare for his Bar Final Examination. In the latter half of 1890 he was living in a single room on 17s a week, doing his own cooking, when one day he was introduced to Narayan Hemchandra, the Gujarati writer, by that good lady, Miss E. A. Manning of the National Indian Association.

Narayan Hemchandra had recently arrived in England. "Where do you stay?" he asked Mohan, in his rather hoarse voice.

"In Store Street."

"Then we are neighbours."

Mohan had heard of him and had read some of his books also. They were both vegetarians. They had a basic similarity of outlook. They took to each other instantly.

Mohan's new acquaintance was quite a character. With his bearded "round face, scarred with smallpox", a nose "neither sharp nor blunt", "clumsy trousers", "wrinkled dirty brown coat" and "tasselled woollen cap", he must have presented a strange spectacle. As he went about in the streets of London, he drew crowds of urchins after him. He was innocent of English grammar, for which he had a lordly contempt; treated "horse" as a verb and "run" as a noun, but was set upon translating into Gujarati works not only from English but from other European languages also! Chaffed over his ignorance of the rules of the language, he would say that he never felt the need of grammar in expressing his thoughts.

Once he turned up at Mohan's room, dressed in a shirt and *dhoti*. Mohan's poor landlady, frightened out of her wits by the strange apparition at her door, rushed in to Mohan, saying: "A sort of a madcap wants to see you."[41] On coming out Mohan was greeted by a broad grin on his visitor's round face, which showed not the slightest trace of concern. He wanted Mohan to help him in learning English. Mohan was but too willing.

They met almost daily, occasionally lunching together, and taking to each other their choicest dishes—Narayan Hemchandra's *mung dal* against Mohan's carrot soup *a l'Anglaise*. But the English style carrot soup made the Gujarati author only turn up his nose and pity his young friend's taste for "pot wash"—as he called it. On hearing from Mohan one day about Cardinal Manning, who had taken a leading part in the settlement of the London Dockers' Strike in the Autumn of 1889, and the glowing tribute that Disraeli had paid to him for his

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simplicity, austerity and philanthropy, Narayan Hemchandra said: "Then I must see the sage".

Mohan wondered, how the queer old bird expected to have audience of a big man like the Cardinal. But see him he did, taking Mohan with him as interpreter. Mohan was immaculately dressed in his black visiting suit. But Hemchandra wore his usual coat and trousers in spite of Mohan's protests. When Mohan twitted him on this, he laughed and told the youngster that he was a greenhorn. "Great men never look at a person's exterior," he said. "They think of his heart." Mohan could not but admire his friend's independence of spirit, and utter indifference to outer trappings. They called on the Cardinal and the Cardinal gave them his blessings. Little could the dapper young man, who accompanied his Gujarati friend to the Cardinal's mansion, have at that time imagined that he would himself one day be appearing before the royalty at Buckingham Palace even more unconventionally dressed.

A self-educated and self-made man, proud of his heritage of Indian culture, Narayan Hemchandra insisted on being himself wherever he went. He financed his travels and sojourn abroad entirely out of the meagre earnings from his writings. Later, he went to France, learnt French and German and presented to the Gujarati reading public the substance of some of the French classics. Finally, he went to the United States, where he was arrested for being "indecently dressed", when once he went out in his shirt and *dhoti*! He was subsequently discharged.

In England, Narayan Hemchandra lived on one pound a week. He had a room for 7s a week. He spent 3d or 4d on washing and 7s on food per week. The rest he spent on clothes and books. Of books he entrusted Mohan with a boxful to be taken to India with him, when he returned. His simplicity and frugality encouraged Mohan in his own experiments in the simple living, and more and more grew young Mohan's appreciation of the sturdier traits of his friend's character, which alone, he felt, could win India the world's respect, and which in his eyes made him, with all his uncouthness a worthier emissary of the motherland than if he had tried to become an "imitation" Englishman.

9

Mohan's adolescent revolt against the orthodox religious beliefs and practices of his parents had left a void within him. The question of a settled or satisfying religious belief continued to exercise his mind. When he mentioned this to Dr Oldfield, Dr Oldfield said: "Why not accept Christianity?"[42]

His friend's suggestion set Mohan thinking. Suddenly he realised that he knew next to nothing about his own religion. He told Dr Oldfield

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that he had hardly studied Hinduism and till he had done that, the question of rejecting it in favour of Christianity or any other religion did not arise. Dr Oldfield did not press his point further but he lost no opportunity to acquaint him with the life of Christ.

Towards the close of 1890 he was introduced to Mme Blavatsky and Mrs Besant. He read Mme Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*, and on March 26, 1891, was enrolled as an associate member of the Blavatsky Lodge for about six months, but did not renew his membership afterwards. In Josephine Ransom's *A Short History of the Theosophical Society*, it is claimed that at a meeting of the Blavatsky Lodge, London, "Mr M K. Gandhi, then a member" was introduced to Col. Olcott. There is obviously a confusion of identities here. For the year of the supposed meeting is given as 1896, when Gandhiji was in South Africa. Col. Olcott in his own biography refers to meeting a Mr Gandhi, "a distinguished Jain". Josephine Ransom seems to have mixed up M. K. Gandhi with Virchand Gandhi, a Jaina friend of Gandhiji, who was studying for the Solicitor's examination when Gandhiji returned to India in 1891, and with whom for a time Gandhiji shared rooms at Bombay (See page 282). He afterwards went to the United States, where also he was sometimes taken for M. K. Gandhi. The fact of the matter is that, despite the advice of friends, Gandhiji did not join the Theosophical Society as a full member. "I politely declined saying, 'With my meagre knowledge of my own religion, I do not want to belong to any religious body.' "[43]

What appealed to him in Theosophy was the doctrine of universal brotherhood. But the occult and the esoteric part of the Theosophical creed he could not accept and in latter years he expressed his strong disapproval of some aspects of it—particularly those relating to holding communication with spirits.[44] The reading of Theosophical literature, however, whetted his appetite for books on Hinduism and disabused him of "the notion fostered by the missionaries that Hinduism was rife with superstition."[45]

Two Theosophist brothers introduced him to Edwin Arnold's verse translation of the *Bhagvad Gita—The Song Celestial*. "It opened to me a new view of life. It touched my spirit as perhaps it can only touch a child of the East. I had found at last, as I believed, the light I needed."[46] The verses at the close of Chapter Two, describing the characteristics of a man of steadfast wisdom, sank deep into his mind. As in the case of his father, it became his book of daily reading. Christianity that he had known in India had been only of the "beef and beer-bottle" variety. But in England his vegetarian contacts brought him in touch with a different sort of Christians. A good Christian from Manchester, whom he met, became interested in his religious views and tried to win him over to the faith. He was a vegetarian and he did not drink. He assured him that neither drinking nor eating of meat was enjoined by the scriptures. "Read the Bible, if only for my sake," he

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pleaded. Mohan agreed, purchased a copy and began with the Old Testament. But after finishing Exodus, he closed the book in despair. He managed somehow to labour through it. It did not interest him. The Book of Numbers he positively disliked. But with the New Testament, it was different. The Sermon on the Mount with its message of returning good for evil, which Shamal Bhatt's immortal lines "for a bowl of water, give a goodly meal", etc., had inculcated upon him in his early childhood, touched him deeply. He compared it with the *Gita*. "My young mind tried to unify the teaching of the *Gita*, the *Light of Asia*, and the Sermon on the Mount. That renunciation was the highest form of religion appealed to me greatly."[47]

In his search for truth he began to attend Church. He listened to noted preachers of the day—Archdeacon Farrar and C. H. Spurgeon, but unable to share their premises, came away unimpressed. Dr Parker's Thursday midday talks in the City Temple appealed to him greatly and he went to listen to him "again and again".

He read the chapter "Hero as a Prophet" in Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero Worship* and learned about "the Prophet's greatness and bravery and austere living".[48] He also read *How I Became A Theosophist* by Mrs Besant. She, after going through the whole gamut of atheism, had finally returned to theism. Reading her book removed whatever lingering trace of his early atheism was left in him. On the death of Charles Bradlaugh on January 30, 1890, Mohan attended his funeral. Among those who were present to do him the last honours at Woking Cemetery were some clergymen also. On their return journey from the funeral, while they were waiting for the train to London, an atheist began to heckle one of them.

"What, Sir, do you believe in the existence of God?"

"I do."

"Pray what is the size of your God and where He may be?"

"Well, if we but knew, He resides in the hearts of us both."

"Now, now, don't take me to be a child," said the champion of atheism with a triumphant look at the onlookers.

The incident deepened his aversion to atheism still further, but he learned from Bradlaugh's example respect for "honest doubt". It matters little what our creed is, he declared later, so long as the law of truth and compassion rules our hearts: "In the other world all are judged not according to their labels or professions but according to their actions, irrespective of their professions."

By the time he left the shores of England his atheism had become a thing of the past. But to, what had become to him the question of questions, viz. which was the one true religion out of those he knew which he could embrace and reject the others as false, he found no answer. No answer was possible because the question itself was wrong. But at the time he did not realise this. His search for "one true religion", therefore,

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continued. It was only in South Africa that he finally discovered that there is no such thing as the only true religion: "Religion is one and it has several branches which are all equal; all have the same root and the same laws of growth." No religion is absolutely perfect, he declared, but there is perfectibility in all religions, and it is, therefore, possible for everybody to strive for perfection by making perfect the practice of his own.

10

A curious survival of an old conservative British tradition was the institution of "keeping terms" for would-be barristers. "Keeping terms" meant eating one's terms in the Inn to which one belonged. It was not necessary to take one's dinner but one had to go to the dining hall punctually at the appointed time and sit there for one hour. The shortest term lasted 20 days, the longest about 31 days. One was said to have "kept" a term when one had attended six dinners in one term. These, whether taken or not, had to be paid for. The Inner Temple, to which Mohan belonged, charged 3s 5d per dinner, the Middle Temple two shillings six, and the Gray's Inn and Lincoln's Inn about the same. How these dinners qualified one for the bar, it is difficult to say. Whatever meaning the institution once had, had gradually been lost. Those who became barristers by eating their terms were sometimes humorously called "dinner barristers".

Mohan punctiliously "kept" his terms. He seldom ate, as he could not relish the vegetarian menu, but to his agreeable surprise he found that he was much in request at the dinner table. The reason for his popularity, he discovered afterwards. At the table two bottles of wine were allowed to each group of four, "and as I did not touch them, I was ever in demand to form a quarter, so that three might empty two bottles."[49] This was especially so on the "grand night" in each term, when extra wines like champagne were served in addition to port and sherry.

To qualify for being called to the bar at the end of twelve terms, two examinations had to be passed, one in Roman Law, the other in Common Law. One could appear in the Roman Law examination after but not before keeping four terms, i.e., at the end of one year after admission. In the other examination called the "Bar Final", a student could appear at the end of two years after admission. To pass the examinations was not difficult. The curriculum was light, the examiners were generous and the percentage of passes was high. Many students did not even read the prescribed books. Some engaged coaches, others managed to pass by mugging up "notes". But Mohan with his strong aversion to cram, window-dressing or sham in any shape or form, managed to make it difficult for himself. He read Justinian in the original Latin and his other law books also with the same care. Two years after his

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admission, he sat for his Bar Final examination between the 15th and 20th of December. The result was announced in London on January 12, 1891. He passed the examination with ease, but as he had not yet completed his twelve terms he could not be called to the Bar and had to stay on in England till the middle of June.

This was the happiest time of his life since he had come to England. He felt free as a bird. He had, after many vicissitudes, attained the goal of his ambition. The next five months were his busiest. He blossomed forth.

In March following he for a time took rooms with Dr Oldfield in St. Stephens Square, Bayswater, London, and founded the West London Food Reforms Society with Josiah Oldfield as President, Edwin Arnold—some time principal of a Poona College—as Vice-President and himself as the founder-Secretary. They gave all their spare time in the evenings to carrying the message of peace and vegetarianism from house to house, lecturing at clubs and addressing public meetings, wherever they could get a hearing. Their conception of "food reform" did not go beyond substituting lentils and pulses for meat, but their enthusiasm and faith sustained them. They arranged in a number of places suppers consisting of lentil soup, followed by boiled rice and large raisins, and called them the "West London Society's Banquets" ! "Those were happy days," Dr Oldfield recalled many years afterwards, "of consciousness that we were helping to make the world better."[50]

The Society which Mohan had founded came to an end when not long afterwards he, according to his practice, shifted his residence to another locality. But it gave him a good experience of organising institutions, which proved useful to him later in his public life. He read voraciously and began to write. Between February 1891 and June 1891 he wrote a series of ten articles. The first six on "Indian Vegetarians" appeared in *The Vegetarian* between February 2 and March 14; the next three on "Some Indian Festivals" between March 28 and April 25; and the last one, "The Foods of India" in *The Vegetarian Messenger* of May 6.

Both in style and substance these writings bear evidence of the vast distance that he has traversed since, a callow youth, soon after his arrival in England, he wrote the journal of his voyage from India. Distinguished by a direct, racy, nervous style, each one of them is a gem. In originality and vividness of description, the papers "Some Indian Festivals" and "Indian Vegetarianism" could hardly be improved upon. The would-be representative of *Daridranarayana* and author of Salt Satyagraha has already discovered the tragedy of India's destitution and the iniquity of the Salt Tax. "There are millions in India who live upon one pice—i.e., one-third of a penny—a day. . . . These poor people have only one meal per day, and that consists of stale bread

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and salt, a heavily taxed article."[51] The British Government's policy of "aiding and abetting" the spread of alcohol—"that enemy of mankind, that curse of civilization";[52] the helplessness of reformers to combat it in the face of the "inaction of an apathetic and dormant government",[53] and the "stolid indifference" of Englishmen in India, who stuck to their own way of living and insisted on "having things they had in England and cooked in the same way", so that little was known about the foods of India in England even after one hundred and fifty years of British rule—all come in for their due share of attention. And no wonder. For the young man was an ardent admirer of Dadabhai Naoroji; and though he had, except on one occasion, never tried to meet the Grand Old Man of India personally, as he set too high a value on his time, he never missed an opportunity of attending any of his talks when one was announced.

Very characteristic of the Mahatma-to-be is the closing remark that a time would come "when the great difference now existing between the food habits of meat-eating in England and grain-eating in India will disappear, and with it some other differences, which in some quarters mar the unity of sympathy that ought to exist between the two countries", and finally that "unity of custom" will lead "to unity of hearts".[54] An Emersonian ring is unmistakable in the following: "The law of compensation will require that what is gained in mental power, must be lost in bodily power. A Samson cannot be a Gladstone." Here for the first time we hear a note which will be echoed again and again later in his philosophy of soul force as against the cult of physical prowess.

"The Foods of India" was first read as a paper at a meeting of the London Vegetarian Society on May 2 at Bloomsbury Hall. According to a paragraph in *The Vegetarian* of May 6, 1891, the speaker was "rather nervous in the beginning". The writer, incidentally, is introduced as "a Brahmin from the Bombay Presidency"!

The paper was highly appreciated, and in the May Day meeting of the Vegetarian Society of London he was appointed with three others as the London Vegetarian Society's delegate to the Conference of the Federal Union of Vegetarian Societies, that was to open at Portsmouth on May 5.

A few days later he again spoke. Mrs MacDouall, a fellow delegate to the Vegetarian Federal Union's Conference, was to have delivered a lecture before the members of the Band of Mercy—an offshoot of H. S. Salt's Humanitarian League. But at the eleventh hour she could not turn up owing to her illness. Mohan, on being approached, readily consented to take the meeting. He spoke for about a quarter of an hour. The point he made in his speech was that the Band of Mercy was a Society for the prevention of cruelty to animals, but not all the members were vegetarians. One could not be kind to animals and at the same time

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eat them. To be logical and consistent the members of the Band of Mercy had to be vegetarians. He closed with a quotation from Shakespeare:

> Who can be wise, amaz'd, temperate, and furious,
> Loyal and neutral, in a moment?

11

The Conference of the Vegetarian Federal Union, to which Mohan had been invited as a delegate, opened in the "Pyramid" Room of the Upper Albert Hall, Portsmouth, at 11 a.m. on May 5, 1891. A conspiracy of circumstances turned it into still another important landmark in his life. Veteran vegetarians had mustered strong from Exeter, Oxford, Cambridge, Norwich, Manchester and London. Representing the Vegetarian Society (Manchester) was Joseph Knight; the London Vegetarian Society had sent Josiah Oldfield, Miss Yates, T. T. Mazmudar and M. K. Gandhi as delegates; there were besides E. D. Shelton of the Osborne House, Ventnor, and H. S. Salt. After a lengthy agenda during the morning and the afternoon sittings, a conversazione was given in the evening, attended by a large number of guests. Speeches on vegetarianism were delivered by several distinguished vegetarians; solos and recitations enlivened the occasion, followed by refreshments; and "a most enjoyable time was spent". But a severe ordeal lay in store for Mohan that night.

Returning to his residence from Conference, he sat down, after dinner, with an Indian friend of his who had accompanied him, to play bridge. Their landlady joined in. Portsmouth was a naval town and many of the lodges in the town, where the guests had been put up, were in fact houses of ill fame in disguise, though those in charge of the arrangements for the guests could not have known this. The landlady of the house in which Mohan and his friend were staying was a woman of easy virtue. Jokes and repartees began to be freely bandied as the game advanced. Innocent enough to begin with, they became bluer and bluer as their spirits warmed up. Mohan's friend took it all in his stride, being an adept in the art. But soon Mohan was completely engulfed. "Just when I was about to go beyond the limit, leaving the cards and the game to themselves, God through the good companion uttered the blessed warning: 'Whence this devil in you? What about your vow to your mother, my boy?'

'What vow? I do not remember.'

'Be off, quick' ".

He woke up from his stupor. With a start, he realised how close he had been to the verge of the abyss. The vision of his mother's pale,

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anxious, agonised face rose before his mind's eye, beckoning him back. "I fled from the scene. To my room I went quaking, trembling and with beating heart, like a quarry escaped from its pursuer." This was the first occasion, he says, on which he had been "moved to lust by a woman other than my wife." He could not sleep that night. He marvelled at his hairbreadth escape and decided "not to leave the house, but" at the first opportunity "somehow leave Portsmouth".[55]

Business Conferences were held on the following day. After papers by H. S. Salt ("The Return to Nature"), Mr Prior ("Practical Suggestions") and Mrs Harrison ("Hints to Housewives and Caterers"), came Mohan's disquisition on "The Foods of India". Here, as at London, it evoked great interest, and led to a discussion in the course of which information was given that "sesame oil was eminently suitable for cooking". Hitherto it was mainly being used for commercial purposes in England. Being requested, Messrs Gandhi and Mazmudar promised to procure samples of some of the foods used in India to be sent to the Society's office.

Mohan had every reason to be satisfied with himself. His paper had been admired by veterans much senior to him. At a time when the art of food reform was yet in its infancy, he had scored by making at least one solid contribution to its advance. A sumptuous six course vegetarian banquet and a public meeting were to follow the day's programme. But to him everything was turned to dust by his experience of the previous night. Without waiting for anything he, as soon as the afternoon session was over, quietly left Portsmouth for Ventnor, "my companion staying there some time longer".

Confirmation is provided by a notice in the issue of the *Ventnor Gazette* for May 7, 1891, where M. K. Gandhi and T. T. Mazmudar are mentioned among the arrivals at Shelton's Vegetarian Hotel.

He stayed at Ventnor from May 7 to May 23 at least. Howard Williams also was there. Being asked by him to speak at a meeting for the promotion of vegetarianism, Mohan readily agreed. Several other speakers also were to deliver addresses. The theme of the address was to be "Vegetarianism: Is it Reasonable?" Not being sure of his ability to deliver an address extempore, Mohan wrote out his speech. But when he stood up to read it at the meeting, he was overcome by stage fright. "My vision became blurred and I trembled, though the speech hardly covered a sheet of foolscap." His speech had consequently to be read by Mazmudar.

It so happened that Dr Joseph Knight was passing through Ventnor at this time in the course of his tour of the South of England, which he afterwards described under the caption "Vegetarianism Down South And Round About" in *The Vegetarian Messenger*. He found "our two Indian friends" staying at the Shelton's Vegetarian Home, "Mr Gandhi

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generally busy writing for vegetarianism, Mr Mojamdar doing his best to see that there should be no chance of the party stagnating for want of merriment." He was present at the meeting in the Friendly Society's Hall, where Mohan spoke. Curiously, he makes no mention of the stage fright. Referring to the meeting, he writes, "Messrs Mojamdar and Gandhi also delivered addresses."[56] Whether the discrepancy between the two accounts is due to a lapse of memory on Gandhiji's part, while writing his Autobiography many years afterwards, or whether Joseph Knight chose to slur over the incident, it is difficult to say.

The comparative leisure at Ventnor gave Mohan time for quiet reflection which he sorely needed after his shattering experience at Portsmouth. It brought home to him as nothing else the value of religious experience as distinguished from mere knowledge of religion, which seems "but chaff" in such moments of trial. Knowledge, learning, spiritual discipline—they all avail us nothing on such occasions, but only God's grace that saves us we know not how and becomes the "help of the helpless" when we approach Him in utter humility and nakedness of spirit.

Of the thing that sustains him through trials man has no inkling, much less knowledge, at the time. If an unbeliever, he will attribute his safety to chance. If a believer, he will say God saved him. He will conclude, as well he may, that his religious study or spiritual discipline was at the back of the state of grace within him. But in the hour of his deliverance he does not know whether his spiritual discipline or something else saves him. Who that has prided himself on his spiritual strength has not seen it humbled to the dust? . . .

Only vaguely I understood that God had saved me on that occasion . . . the phrase 'God saved me' has a deeper meaning for me today, and still I feel that I have not yet grasped its entire meaning. . . . When every hope is gone, 'when helpers fail and comforts flee', I find that help arrives somehow, from I know not where. Supplication, worship, prayer are no superstition, they are acts more real than the acts of eating, drinking, sitting or walking. . . . They alone are real, all else is unreal.

Such worship or prayer is no flight of eloquence; it is no lip-homage. It springs from the . . . purity of the heart when it is 'emptied of all but love'. . . . It is in itself independent of any sensuous effort. I have not the slightest doubt that prayer is an unfailing means of cleansing the heart of passions. But it must be combined with the utmost humility.[57]

Mohan had booked his passage for home by the S. S. *Oceania*. As the time of his departure (June 12) drew nigh; he felt more and more uneasy. He was raw and inexperienced. He knew nothing about Indian Law, as Indian Law was not included in the curriculum of studies for the bar. He had heard stories of the legal prowess of Pherozeshah Mehta, the famous Bombay lawyer, "who roared like a lion in the law

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courts", while he could scarcely open his lips in company. All this made him feel extremely nervous as to his future as a lawyer.

On the suggestion of a friend, he saw Frederick Pincutt, the Conservative English lawyer, who used to take a keen interest in Indian students in London. Pincutt was all affability and goodwill. He told the budding barrister that "Pherozeshah Mehta's acumen, memory and ability were not essential to the making of a successful lawyer",[58] and advised him to increase his general knowledge, which was very meagre, by more reading. Successful practice of law required knowledge of human nature. A lawyer should be able to judge a man's character from his face. He recommended to Mohan Kaye and Malleson's *History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857* and Shemmelpennick's and Lavator's books on physiognomy. Pincutt's kindliness and his reassuring words relieved his anxiety somewhat. He purchased Lavator's book but found that it did not help him much. Kaye and Malleson's book he was able to read only after going to South Africa.

12

On Saturday evening the June 5th, 1891, Room No. XIX at the Holborn was "brilliantly beautiful" with electric lights shining upon "the radiance of the plate and glass, upon ruddy fruits and blooming flowers". The occasion was a farewell dinner that Mohan had given to a select party of friends—a vegetarian dinner by special arrangement at the swell non-vegetarian Holborn! The dinner, we are told, was of a "most elaborate and dainty character" and "thoroughly enjoyed by all". There were music and the post-prandial speeches, of course. Mohan had intended on the occasion to make a short humorous speech, consisting of a very few sentences which "I had with great care thought out". But when his turn came to speak, he writes in his Autobiography, he began with the famous "I conceive" anecdote about Addison's maiden speech in the House of Commons, and stuck there. This was "my last effort to make a public speech in England. . . . But this time too I only succeeded in making myself ridiculous. . . . 'I thank you, gentlemen, for having kindly responded to my invitation,' I said abruptly and sat down."[59] Soon, however, he pulled himself up and did better at the end. According to *The Vegetarian* of June 13, 1891, "Mr Gandhi made a very graceful though somewhat nervous speech", welcoming all present, spoke of "the pleasure it gave him to see the habit of abstinence from flesh progressing in England, related the manner in which his connection with the London Vegetarian Society arose and in so doing took occasion to speak in a touching way of what he owed to Dr Oldfield." He ended by expressing the hope that a future conference of the Federal Union would be held in India.

Present at the function was Mr Hills, who proposed a toast of the

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evening to "our host". Mazmudar in a humorous speech "generally praised England and Englishmen all round".

Very significant was the tribute paid by Dr Oldfield for the lesson that their departing host had taught of "patient, persistent overcoming of difficulties, in pursuit of an aim".

His discerning eye was not misled by the outward appearance of the "young, shy, diffident youth, slim and a little weakly", of his early acquaintance, who had once come to consult him on the question of his diet. Long afterwards, when the curtain had been rung down on the last act of the drama, he wrote referring to his fellow food reformer of early London days, "I have always felt since that the Indians coming to England have to face the same great testing examination. If they fail, they prove that they have commonplace minds and they drop into the ordinary run of English diet, English habits and general mediocrity. If on the other hand, they can stand firm in their faith and be prepared to die for it, they prove themselves men indeed. Upon this class of men does the mantle of Gandhi still fall and the future of India depend."[60]

Five days after this, on June 10, Mohan was called to the Bar. He enrolled in the High Court on the following day, and on June 12, 1891, sailed homewards.

During his stay in England, he had for the most part moved among non-conformists and radicals. The vegetarian movement with which he became identified was one of the salients of the progressive movement. The simple life was another. Both were a part of the search for a new way of life. One section of the pioneers of progress, represented by men like Henry Salt and Edward Carpenter, had hoped that Labour in its policy would be led to return to the land and become simple in its needs. But the Webbs, Shaw and Hyndman, representing the other section, preferred an industrialised community, with fewer hours of work and plenty of scope for "cultured leisure". The former lost the day.

The trend that was abandoned at a crucial point in the development of Socialism in England was later picked up by Gandhiji. The history of scientific discovery is replete with instances of a line of investigation, dropped by one scientist in the course of his experiments, being picked up by another after him, and in his hands yielding results of far-reaching importance, undreamt of by his predecessor. So it was in the present case. Out of Gandhiji's experiments in the simple life later, as we shall see, grew his movement for the resuscitation of India's villages, and her dead or dying handicrafts, symbolised by the spinning-wheel; his vegetarianism broadened into his experiments in Ahimsa. These became the two central planks in India's non-violent struggle for independence under his lead.

His vegetarian activities brought him into contact with some of the finest types of Englishmen, and this in its turn bred in him a deep admiration for some traits in British character—their

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discipline, simplicity, reserve, sober commonsense, faith in God, love of family, and respect for tradition. "Even now, next to India," he remarked to Joseph Doke twenty years afterwards, "I would rather live in London than in any other place in the world."[61]

Of the friends that he had made Drs Allinson and Oldfield became his medical consultants during his subsequent visits to England. Dr Oldfield continued to take interest in his spiritual development. He had him appointed as agent for the L.V.S. in South Africa and became a link between him and Edward Maitland of the Esoteric Christian Union. Eventually he came to India where he served as Chief Medical Officer of Bhavnagar State in the nineteen-twenties. Dr Salt chaired a meeting of the Vegetarians in London, during Gandhiji's visit to England in 1931. Also to meet the Mahatma in the loin-cloth on that occasion was a faultlessly dressed Englishman, Maitre d'hotel of the Dorchester, who used as a youngster in the early eighteen-nineties to take lessons in dancing with the "black-coated silk-hatted" lad Mohan, then trying to ape the "English gentleman".

Nearly three years ago, Mohan had come to England a stripling, in pursuit of a rather humdrum personal ambition, uncertain of himself, with no settled convictions, religious belief or a sense of a mission. His path was strewn with difficulties. He had overcome them all. He had passed through the Slough of Despond and the Shadow of the Valley of Despair. His search for goals had borne rich fruit. As he regarded in retrospect the uphill struggle and the perils that had beleagured his path, his heart overflowed with thanksgiving that the Almighty in His infinite mercy had brought him out of it all with his moral being unsullied, his triple vow intact. "I am bound to say," he remarked to a representative of *The Vegetarian*, answering a question, on the eve of his departure from England, "that during my nearly three years' stay in England I . . . have done many things which perhaps I might better have left undone, and yet I carry one great consolation with me that I shall go back without having taken meat or wine, and that I know from personal experience that there are so many vegetarians in England."[62]

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CHAPTER XII

STORM WITHOUT AND WITHIN

1

It was a beautiful summer's day, balmy and bright, and the sun shone brilliantly as on Saturday, June 12, 1891, the 11-45 express carrying the passengers to the outward bound P. & O. liner, the S.S. *Oceania* pulled out of the Liverpool Street station to the docks.

Powered by a 1,200 h.p. engine, the 6,188 ton *Oceania* was for that day both commodious and comfortable. The deck was gay with passengers and their friends who had come to see them off. They were all treated to tea by the P. & O. Company. As the bell rang to warn leavetakers that the ship was about to weigh anchor, the crowd melted away, and amid much cheering and waving of handkerchiefs, she slowly steamed out of the harbour.

It was with mixed feelings that Mohandas left the shores of England. He was glad at the prospect of being back with his friends and relatives after a long absence, but he was also sad to leave London, with its multifarious institutions, public parks, museums, vegetarian restaurants, theatres and public galleries, to which he had become deeply attached. Three years ago he had stepped into the wide, wide world out of his mother's lap, as it were. He was now returning home a man, to face the responsibilities of life. He was no more afraid of mixing with other passengers. Vegetarianism presented him a problem no longer. There were only two vegetarians on board. They were both prepared to manage with boiled potatoes, cabbage and butter, if it came to that. But there was no need for it. The ship's steward undertook to provide them regularly with rice, vegetable curry and brown bread and fresh and stewed fruit from the first class saloon. They had all they could wish for and more. Mohan had even a quiet dig at the gourmet scale of catering for the passengers and more than gourmand justice that the passengers did to it. As he observed, they were "punctual to the minute" at their meals at any rate. Beginning with a couple of cups of tea and a few biscuits by way of "bed tea" early in the morning, they were ready at 8-30 for a hearty breakfast of oatmeal porridge, some fish and chop, currie, jam, bread, butter and coffee or tea. The luncheon at 1-30 consisted of plenty of mutton and vegetables, rice and curry and pastry and what not, supplemented two days in the week with nuts and fruits. That did not interfere with a "refreshing"

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cup of tea and buscuits at 4 p.m. and "high tea" two hours later, consisting of bread and butter and jam or marmalade, chops with salads, tea and coffee. Thanks to the salubrious sea breeze, all that was quickly digested so that they could not retire to bed before taking by way of supper "a few, a very few—only eight or ten, fifteen at the most—biscuits, a little cheese and some wine and beer"![1]

Time between the meals hung heavy despite "discussions and cards and scandals". There was much drinking which on one occasion ended in fisticuffs. For relief the passengers arranged concerts and speeches, races for prizes and tug of war, etc. One evening in a week was set apart for concerts and speeches. Mohandas felt it was time that he "butted in". He requested the Secretary of the Committee, who arranged all these events, to give him a quarter of an hour for a speech on vegetarianism. The Secretary readily consented. He suggested that the young man make his speech humorous. "I might be nervous," answered Mohandas, "but humorous I could not be." Knowing that he would have to face a hostile audience he spared no pains to prepare his speech, and wrote and re-wrote it to make it word-perfect. But to his mortification, the concert never came off! The passengers had had enough of it on the previous occasion. But the evangelist of vegetarianism was not to be baulked of his opportunity. "I succeeded in discussing vegetarianism with two or three passengers, who heard me calmly, and answered in effect: 'We grant you the argument; but so long as we feel happy on our present diet (never mind about our being dyspeptic at times), we cannot give it a trial.' "

One of them, however, was tempted by the fruit that the two vegetarians were getting every day. He "did give the V.E.M. diet a trial, but the chop was too great a temptation for him. Poor man!"[2]

At Aden the passengers for Bombay were transhipped to the S.S. *Assam*, also owned by the P. & O. Company. The contrast between the two ships was striking. The *Oceania* was spick and span with plenty of elbow room for all, and English waiters, who were clean and polite. The *Assam* was only half as big. Everybody was cramped. The waiters were Goanese, who were the "reverse of clean", "murdered the Queen's English", and were sulky and slow.

It was the end of June and the beginning of the rainy season, when the Indian Ocean can be rough. On the second night, the weather became all of a sudden stormy and for the next three days the ship pitched and tossed. The passengers were seasick. The breakfast table was deserted; the cabin doors banged; the baggage danced on the floor; passengers were tumbled out of their berths; and at dinner the contents of the dishes landed in the diners' laps instead of finding their way into their mouths. Broken china, upset soup plates and cruet-stands and napkins dyed yellow completed the picture.

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Mohan ventured out on deck only to be buffeted back into his cabin by a high wave that splashed across the deck.

"Would you call this a real storm?" he asked a steward.

"No sir, this is nothing." And flailing his arms he showed how the ship would behave in a real storm.

The storm without was nothing compared with the turmoil within. His life in England had been, comparatively speaking, sheltered with no financial worries, family responsibilities or domestic problems. He was now to enter stormy waters. Before him loomed the question of his caste, the struggle for his living and the introduction of reforms in his family over which he had been ruminating.

On the fifth night, the ship reached Bombay and Mohan bade farewell to the steamer. It was a strange assortment of human cargo that the S.S. *Oceania* and *Assam* had been carrying. "Some were going to... Australia in high hopes....Some were called away by a sense of duty, some were going to meet their husbands...some were adventurers who, being disappointed at home, were going to pursue their adventures, God knows where." The thought overwhelmed him: "Were the hopes of all realized?...How hopeful, yet how often disappointed, is the human mind! We live in hope."[3]

Owing to the rough weather, the arrival of the ship had been delayed. It was late in the evening when the young M. K. Gandhi, Bar-at-law, landed at the jetty in pelting rain. His brother Lakshmidas met him and took him to the residence of Dr P. J. Mehta, who had returned from England earlier after completing his studies and had insisted on Mohandas staying with his family in Bombay. Dr Mehta introduced him to his brother Revashankar Jagjivan Jhaveri. The two brothers became his life-long friends and bankers on whom he could later draw to an unlimited extent whenever he required funds for his public activities.

Mohandas was pining to meet his mother. He had said to her, when in doubt and fear she had given him her leave to go to England, "Mother, when I return after completing my studies, you will see whether or not I have deserved your blessings." Surely, there would be a message waiting from her, he had thought. Instead, there was embarrassed silence. He was keen on proceeding to Rajkot immediately. They shilly-shallied. At last he asked point blank:

"How is mother?"

"She is no more."

Bit by bit the truth came out. In his absence her health had begun to fail. Day in and day out she would think of nothing but her Moniya. On the day the cable bringing the news of his success in the Bar Examination arrived, she was on her death bed. She heard it with tears of joy. Again and again she asked her eldest son when Moniya would be returning. "If only I can see his face I shall depart in peace," she said.

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They tried to reassure her. But she had begun to lose hope. "If I am not alive when he returns," she said to them, "do get him to undergo the purification ceremony at Nasik and give a caste dinner to all the members of the caste in Rajkot."

The news of her death had been withheld from him while he was in England to spare him the shock in a foreign land. The shock was not the less severe on that account. "My grief was even greater than over my father's death," he writes. "Most of my cherished hopes were shattered. But I . . . did not give myself up to any wild expression of grief. I could even check the tears, and took to life just as though nothing had happened."[4]

2

With every ill comes the cure. On the night on which Mohandas received the news of this affliction, he was also introduced by Dr Mehta to one who was to provide him solace and spiritual guidance which he so sorely needed. This was Raychandbhai, whom Gandhiji has bracketed with Ruskin and Tolstoy as the persons who influenced him most profoundly. In spiritual perception, he placed him even before the Russian sage.

About the same age as himself, Rajchandra was the son-in-law of an elder brother of Dr Mehta and a partner in the firm of Revashankar Jagjivan Jhaveri. Jhaveri is the Gujarati for a dealer in gems. He was also known as Kavi or poet. He had the reputation of being a *Shatavadhani*, i.e., a person who can remember or attend to one hundred things at a time. For instance, if one could read a book, dictate a speech, work mentally an intricate mathematical problem, answer questions, listen to a conversation, play on a musical instrument in orchestral accompaniment and carry on a game of chess simultaneously, and could afterwards repeat word for word the conversation, the contents of his reading, along with the questions and answers and recall the sequence of all the moves in the game without a mistake, he would be called a *Saptavadhani* (one who could attend to seven i.e. *sapta*, things at a time). A *Shatavadhani* should be able to attend to a hundred such things simultaneously. In 1887 Rajchandra is said to have given a demonstration in Bombay before a select audience which included Sir Charles Sargent, Chief Justice of Bombay High Court and Dr Peterson. Sir Charles suggested that he should tour Europe to exhibit his feats of memory. But Rajchandra declined. Later he stopped giving demonstrations altogether.

Dr P. J. Mehta invited Mohandas to try the prodigy. Mohandas was young. He was not a little vain of his knowledge of English. He wrote down all the words, phrases and technical terms in English, and all the European languages that he could think and read them to Rajchandra. When he had finished, Rajchandra without the slightest

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effort repeated them in the exact sequence. Mohandas was astounded at his prodigious memory. It brought down his juvenile conceit a little. It, however, was not this that compelled his soul's homage, not even Rajchandra's profound knowledge of religious scriptures, of which he came to know later, but his purity of character, self-discipline and equipoise, above all his passionate striving after spiritual perfection. This found expression, when he was only eighteen, in this poetical composition.

O, for the hour of that unique bliss,
When all the knots untied—within, without
And all the subtlest bonds removed, I shall
Walk on the blessed path that sages trod
of yore.
Transcending mind and all its fleeting moods,
And fixed in deep detachment evermore,
Regarding body only as the means,
For self-discipline,
And nothing else for any cause whatever,
No more deluded I shall be
By the sense-magic, or this earthly frame
of mine.

During nearly two years of his stay in India Mohandas scrutinised his life minutely at close quarters—sleeping, walking, working or resting, and found in him not a trace of attachment, but only renunciation of the highest order. He went about dressed in *dhoti*, *angarakha* (loose old-style coat) and turban, not caring whether they had been ironed or not. He was indifferent as to what he ate. He sat on a palette spread on the floor. His gait was deliberate and slow. He seemed always wrapped in contemplation. But his eyes were keen and alert, with a calm, steady, piercing gaze, that betokened intense concentration. The face was round, lips thin, nose neither sharp nor blunt. He was of a slight build, medium height and dusky complexion. His smiling, cheerful countenance radiated serenity. His speech had a musical quality which held the listener spellbound. He was never at a loss for the right word and seldom scored out what he wrote, yet whatever he wrote was word-perfect.

Never did an idle word escape his lips. He did not know what it was to be frivolous. Every action of his bore the mark of poise, dignity, and deep earnestness. He regarded all his outward activity but a means to the cultivation of self-discipline and attainment of the supreme goal of liberation.

The Gujarati poet Shamal Bhatt has described the businessman as a saint. Shrimad Rajchandra was the personification of that ideal. He never resorted to untruth, subterfuge or dishonest practice of any kind in his business dealings, giving the lie direct to the notion that a successful business cannot be run on strictly ethical lines, or that a man of religion cannot engage in commerce and keep intact his religious principles. On

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the contrary, he demonstrated that spirituality can very well go hand in hand with success in business and business provide still another field for the cultivation and application of spiritual values.

Rajchandra was a living refutation of the fallacy that spirituality or other-worldliness, and shrewdness or practical wisdom are exclusive, one of the other. In him spirituality was joined with business acumen of a very high order. Simple and straight as a die, he could see through all the tricks, however well camouflaged, when anyone tried to deceive him, his blazing eyes and knitted brow reflecting the deep anguish that he felt. Such was his moral sensitivity that he used to say that he could possibly bear the anguish of being transfixed by spears but not the anguish that untruth, deception or an unclean practice caused him. This trait became even more pronounced later in Gandhiji.

His remarkable clarity of mind enabled him to see far ahead of a problem and master all the intricacies surrounding it, while his razor-sharp intellect gave him a judgment that in most cases was found to be unerring.

He was an expert connoisseur of gems and carried on vast business operations that easily ran into seven figures and embraced more than one country in Asia and Europe. But he carried his burden effortlessly and never appeared to be troubled by care. Even when his mind was occupied with business, his soul was absorbed in the search for the Supreme. He always kept a book on religion or philosophy or a note book by his side. Whenever he had a free moment, he would take up the one to read or the other to write his spiritual reflections in. No matter how pre-occupied he was, he never turned away an inquirer, who came to him for spiritual help.

He often used to say that it should be impossible to deceive a man who had attained full knowledge. A worldly man may be good and yet a simpleton. But an aspirant for liberation must *ipso facto* combine goodness with pure wisdom that comes from self-realisation. Hypocrisy and sham cannot prevail against a man who has realised, just as in the presence of truth and Ahimsa, untruth and *himsa* cannot prevail. Hatred ceases in the presence of love; similarly, before the sun of straightforwardness hypocrisy and deceit cannot subsist. A man of religion, who has attained pure knowledge, will be able to spot the hypocrite the moment he sees one, and melt with pity at his spiritual deformity. In short, knowledge of one's own self comprehends knowledge of the self in everybody.

Gandhiji implicitly believed in this. True, Rajchandra was not himself completely proof against deception. People did some time cozen him in the name of religion. That, said Gandhiji, did not disprove the rule, it only showed how difficult it is to attain full self-knowledge.

Shri Rajchandra's knowledge about religions was encyclopaedic. He was proficient in Sanskrit and Magadhi. He had studied carefully the *Vedanta*, the *Gita* and the *Bhagavata Puran*, and the Jaina scriptures

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along with the *Koran*, *Zendavesta*, etc. Although he was himself a Jaina, he never looked down upon other religions. Not once did he suggest to Mohandas that he should adopt any particular religion and renounce his own in order to attain salvation. His emphasis always was on conduct —on closer and still closer self-examination and refinement of one's practice. When Gandhiji asked him what books on religion he should read, he recommended to him the *Gita*, bearing in mind his natural bent and the impress on him during his early childhood of his family environment.

3

Three things in the Jaina system of thought influenced Gandhiji's outlook most. They were Ahimsa on the religious side, *anekantavad* or *syadvad* on the philosophical side, and the institutions of vows on the ethical side. He was greatly attracted, too, by the Jaina theory of knowledge.

On the religious side, the Jaina doctrine is pluralistic. In its philosophical aspect it is characterised by a dialectical way of thinking. According to the Jaina *shastras*, Ahimsa is not a negative virtue—a mere mechanical abstention from violence—but a positive quality based on universal love resulting from the recognition of oneness of life and, therefore, kinship of all living beings. One who has realised this ideal cannot be indifferent to the suffering of others. Further, the Jaina religion, it is claimed, has been the first, perhaps the only religion in the world to include in its conception of universal love, not only human beings, but the entire sub-human creation, including plant life.

On the philosophical side, the Jaina thinkers have propounded the principle of *anekantavad* or "manyness" of Truth or Reality. Reality according to this view has a very complex structure. Every proposition is true, but only from a particular standpoint. Since the same thing may be regarded from different aspects or standpoints, what is true from one standpoint may not be true from another. For instance, to a passenger on a running train the trees are moving in a direction opposite to that of the train but a man standing outside finds them stationary. Lukewarm water is cold in relation to hot and hot in relation to cold water. Truth being relative to our standpoints, to occupy one standpoint is not to deny other standpoints.

This possibility of many standpoints or contradictory propositions, relating to the same subject, each true from its relative standpoint, is also known as *syadvad* or the doctrine of "may be". Since all views are partial, say the Jaina thinkers, to overemphasise one aspect of reality, to the exclusion of other aspects, can give only a very partial, inadequate and misleading idea of it. A classical instance of this is provided by the fable of the seven blind men who gave seven different descriptions of the elephant, all right from their respective points of view and wrong from

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the point of view of one another and right and wrong from the point of view of the man who knew the elephant. Reality, to be comprehended, must be examined from all the various aspects, and an integrated view taken of the whole.

According to Hegel's dialectical principle every concrete experience must exhibit the three aspects of affirmation, negation and comprehending unity. The Jaina thinkers define reality as a "permanence in the midst of change, identity in the midst of diversity, and unity in the midst of multiplicity".[5] Every object in nature, it is pointed out, must exhibit these three aspects. A mango plant, for instance, is present in the seed. But the seed must change and decay or else the plant will not grow; it will lose its vitality and die. At the same time its identity remains unimpaired throughout its process of growth. A mango seed cannot, in the middle of the process of growth, be transformed into a margosa plant and *vice versa*. This underlying identity is the most important aspect of a growing plant.

Since reality is multiform and ever changing, it follows from it as a corollary that no statement can hold good at all times and in all ways and in all places, and it is, therefore, impossible to pledge ourselves to an inflexible creed. Nor may anyone claim exclusive truth for his own.

This way of thinking is fundamental to the *Gita*, which Gandhiji called his "dictionary of action"; and it held a very important place in his own life. His extreme catholicity, which went beyond mere "toleration" and insisted on "acceptance" of all religions as equally true from their respective devotee's standpoints, and therefore equally valid as a means for the realisation of the Supreme, stemmed from it.

The doctrine that all truth is relative to our standpoint also became the basis of Gandhiji's Satyagraha or non-violence. He claimed to be a believer in *syadvad*. But his *syadvad* was not, as he put it, "the *syadvad* of the learned". It was peculiarly his own.

I am an Advaitist (non-dualist) and yet I can support Dvaitism (dualism). The world is changing every moment, and is therefore unreal, it has no permanent existence. But though it is constantly changing, it has a something about it which persists and it is, therefore, to that extent real. I have, therefore, no objection to calling it real and unreal, and thus being called an *anekantavadi* or a *syadvadi*....It has been my experience that I am always true from my point of view and am often wrong from the point of view of my honest critics. I know that we are both right from our respective points of view. And this knowledge saves me from attributing motives to my opponents or critics....I very much like this doctrine of manyness of reality. It is this doctrine that has taught me to judge a Mussalman from his own standpoint and a Christian from his. Formerly I used to resent the ignorance of my opponents. Today I can love them because I am gifted with the eyes to see myself as others see me and *vice versa*. I want to take the whole world

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in the embrace of my love. My *anekantavad* is the result of the twin doctrine of Satya and Ahimsa.[6]

The third thing that fundamentally affected Gandhiji's life was the Jaina institution of vows, and especially their insistence on the control of the palate. Since attainment of salvation, or liberation from the cycle of death and rebirths, is the *summum bonum* of life, and actions in their gross and subtle aspects forge the links that bind the soul to matter, the Jaina *shastras* lay down that one should so conduct oneself in one's daily life as "not to allow the evil channels of *karma* (which desire excavates for itself) to come into operation".[7] In other words, one should progressively restrict the field of one's activity. For this purpose, certain rules or vows, known as *anuvratas*, are recommended. They are Truth, Celibacy, Non-violence, Non-stealing and Non-possession. Control of the palate is the first step towards as also the fruit of the control of the self.

Vows, implying absolute renunciation of certain categories of activity, the Jaina thinkers argue, tend automatically to decrease more and more the association of the soul with matter which is the cause of its bondage.

Though Gandhiji adopted the institution of vows, his approach to it was somewhat different. Vows to him were primarily and essentially a means of cultivating self-discipline and a protecting shield in the hour of temptation and doubt. But more of it in another place.

Lastly comes the Jaina theory of knowledge. According to it, *Jnana* or knowledge is the intrinsic property of the *atman*. In its perfect condition the soul is pure knowledge and pure intuition. All knowledge is in the soul. Its true nature is obscured by the impediments of passions and emotions. These cause the inflow of the inert Karmic substance, or *achetan* (unconscious) matter, which prevents the soul from exercising its natural function in full measure.[8] In the words of Dr Radhakrishnan, "Interests in the physical concerns of life. . . confine our knowledge to the immediately useful. So aspects of reality in which we are not interested are shut off by selective attention."[9] When the soul is restored to its pristine purity, the Jaina philosophy holds, it is characterised by "omniscience or knowledge of all things—past, present and future."

Gandhiji held that a man, whose mind is undisturbed by sense storms and is completely emptied of self, develops an unerring intuition. Or, as Dr Radhakrishnan puts it, the soul then "vibrates at its natural rhythm and exercises its function of unlimited knowing".[10]

It was not as a result of direct impact, but through the infiltration of Gujarat Vaishnavism by the Jaina religious thought that Gandhiji came to adopt many of the Jaina observances. In the process he poured into them a new meaning and substituted his own rationale for the traditional one. In latter years his keenest shafts were directed against some of the tenets of the Jaina faith as practised by its votaries, which he characterised

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as a travesty of its true spirit.[11] For a long time he contemplated writing a treatise on the doctrine of *syadvad*. But this was not to be.

4

With all his profound regard for Shrimad Rajchandra and the deep debt that he owed to his teaching and guidance, Gandhiji could not adopt him as a *guru*, though he believed in the institution of the *guru* and even longed to find one. The institution of *guru* holds a unique place in Hinduism. A *guru* is an adept, a master who has traversed the whole way and is thoroughly familiar with it. He demands or rather, by virtue of his perfection, commands surrender on the pupil's part of his whole being—a surrender wholehearted, spontaneous and complete. Whatever the *guru* says, should go straight home without the aid of reason. This means deep reverence for and absolute faith in the *guru*. In it there can be no room for questioning, criticism or doubt. Once such surrender is made, it is held, a psychological "transference" will be effected between the master and the pupil, the latter being gradually moulded into the image of the former. Mohandas, with all his reverence for Shrimad Rajchandra, could not bring to him that unquestioning self-surrender. He felt the need to argue, to reason, to understand. He was even critical of what seemed to him to be Rajchandra's shortcomings—his habit, for instance, of mixing business with study or with religious instruction, his obsessive overwork and disregard of the rules of health and so on. Gandhiji believed implicitly in the golden maxim "one world at a time", which even a *shatavadhani* sage may not disregard. A person who has attained complete detachment, he maintained, will give exclusive attention to one or the other—business or religion — whichever he considers to be more important. The mixture is bad precept and bad example.

There were other points besides on which they differed. Shrimad Rajchandra believed in the observance of orthodox caste rules, in regard to eating and drinking with members of castes considered to be "low", as a part of "*arya*" culture. His young disciple joined issue with him on this. What objection could there be to dining with a person belonging to a "low caste", if he observed all the rules of cleanliness and abstained from forbidden food or drink like the most orthodox, he asked. Following the traditionalist view, Rajchandra answered that, even if it could be shown that the practice was otherwise harmless it would still be reprehensible on the ground of public weal. It would set a bad example which could mislead simple-minded folk, who might not have that degree of wariness or circumspection. If, therefore, in the interest of public work Mohandas found it necessary to accept invitations from non-Hindus to parties or dinners, the best course would be to restrict himself to uncooked food like fruits etc. The disciple was prepared to accept the advice on the ground purely of abstemiousness and self-restraint, but

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the more he saw of the evil of reducing religion to a system of touch-me-notism, the more his spirit rebelled against it and he ended by condemning it as the bane of Hinduism and one of the root causes of communal friction, which had, by permeating other religions besides Hinduism in India, corrupted them also.

Shrimad Rajchandra regarded countries other than India as "*anarya Bhoomi*"—"barbarian lands"—and was apprehensive that Gandhiji's stay in South Africa might have an adverse effect on his spiritual growth. To an onlooker this fear of the teacher would look like the consternation of the mother-hen when she sees ducklings, from eggs which she mistook for her own, take to the water for the first time. Even in the matter of Brahmacharya, in which Shrimad Rajchandra may be said to have influenced him most, Gandhiji rejected the orthodox formula of the "nine-fold wall of protection" presented to him by the teacher, and evolved in its place a philosophy of his own which left the orthodox gasping.[12]

Shrimad Rajchandra died prematurely at the age of thirty-three, owing largely to the neglect of physical exercise and rules of health, in short, overstrain. This, in Gandhiji's eyes, was a sign of his imperfection. A man who has shed all attachment, as an aspirant for liberation must, he held, will ever be considerate to Brother Ass and not put upon it more than the poor animal's back can bear. If we regard ourselves as an instrument of the Divine Will, we will look upon our body as a trust to be husbanded carefully and used for the attainment of liberation only, not take upon ourselves undertakings that are beyond the capacity of our physical frame to cope with. That Rajchandra suffered from physical ailments was to Gandhiji an indication that he had not attained complete detachment. All ailment is the fruit of attachment; there can be no *roga* (illness) where there is no *raga* (attachment), he argued, and since one who has not completely got rid of *raga* (attachment) cannot attain liberation, Shrimad Rajchandra, Gandhiji held, could not have attained *Moksha*, or freedom from the cycle of birth and death, for which he was ceaselessly striving, howsoever near he might have come to it. For expressing this view, he lost caste with some of the more ardent of Shrimad Rajchandra's followers. A foreword and a chapter of reminiscences containing the aforementioned view, which he wrote on their request, was not published in their memorial volume of Shrimad Rajchandra's collected works!

The throne thus remained vacant. His quest for a *guru* continued. In the end he found that, as in the case of his quest for one perfect religion, it was the quest itself rather than the finding of it, that constituted the seeker's prize. Truth alone was his *guru*, he declared. The quest for a *guru* was like the quest for an ideal unattainable so long as one is fettered by the limitations of the flesh.

While Shrimad Rajchandra lived, he continued to provide Gandhiji

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guidance in his pilgrimage of the spirit. The disciple did not accept all the master's teachings or perhaps any of them in its entirety, but he no more felt, as he had before he found him, like a derelict mariner in an open, oarless boat in mid-ocean without rudder or compass to steer by. In the end he outgrew the master's teachings. This also was a part of the master's teaching.

5

While Mohandas was still on the high seas on his way back home from England, a Brahmin went round on behalf of the Mahajans, or heads of the caste organisation, to warn all members of the Modh Vania community, to which the Gandhis belonged, that anyone having any social intercourse with the excommunicated Gandhi family —even if he as much as accepted a cup of water from them—would be himself excommunicated. The elders of the family were perturbed. They made arrangements for the youngster on his return to undergo a purification ceremony and get himself formally readmitted to the caste. They told Mohandas of his mother's last wish. The community was divided on the point. One section was prepared to readmit him on performing a simple purification ceremony, the other insisted on the delinquent paying a heavy fine. This Mohandas refused to do point blank. The elders of the family assured him that they, too, were equally firm on that point and would back him through thick and thin.

To conciliate the former section, they took him to Nasik, a famous sacred place in Maharashtra, where he went through a purification ritual. He did not like it, but he did as he was asked for the sake of his elder brother, whose word "was law for me", and his mother's last wish.

After the ceremony the party returned to Rajkot. All the members of the caste were invited to a dinner. They heartily responded to the invitation. The elders in the family, Gandhiji's nonagenarian sister related, wanted her brother himself to carry the huge platter from which food was served. This he refused. But "he pulled off his clothes and with the upper half of the body uncovered in the prescribed manner, served all the guests."

The caste ban on him in Rajkot was consequently lifted but in Bombay and Porbandar it continued. "I never tried to seek readmission to the section that had refused it," Gandhiji writes. "Nor did I feel even mental resentment against any of the headmen of that section." His wife's relations were prepared secretly to evade the prohibition but "I would not so much as drink water at their houses. . . . Had I agitated for being admitted . . . I should. . . have found myself in a whirlpool of agitation and perhaps a party to dissimulation."[13] As it was, he never had any trouble from the caste. They even helped.

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At home his brother had made elaborate preparations in anticipation of his arrival. He had got their house whitewashed and renovated; ceilings had been put under the tiled roofs, and brand-new furniture and crockery purchased at considerable expense. The good-hearted man must have thought that his brother would begin minting money immediately on his return. Mohandas remonstrated against this extravagance but himself pushed ahead with his "reforms". This meant the use of knife and fork and chinaware, the Europeanisation of the dress, and "food reform". Oatmeal porridge began to be served at breakfast. Cocoa was to replace tea and coffee, but it only became an additional beverage. All this meant further drain on the slender resources.

The poor wife, too, came in for her share of the "reform". She had to learn to read and write to become an educated lady as a fit barrister's wife. But this attempt, too, foundered as before and for much the same reason. The young husband had now become if anything more intolerant. Nor had he been able yet to exorcise the goblin of jealousy. Once he went to the length of sending her away to her parents' and consented to receive her back only after "I had made her miserable".

He was, however, more successful in the education of the children. His eldest born was now three years old. To make the children hardy, he insisted upon regular physical exercise. He liked their company and they his. Often he would take them out with him for a walk, carry one or two of the tots on his shoulders, and bathe them at a tank on the way. "I have ever since thought," he writes, "I should make a good teacher of children."

But how was the family pot to be kept boiling in the meantime? He was a novice. No clients came to him and he expected none to be "fool enough" to come. He decided to go to Bombay for a while to gain experience at the High Court, secure what briefs he could, and study Indian law.

In Bombay he engaged Ravishankar, a Brahmin, to cook for him in the small establishment that he set up for himself. Study of Indian law he found to be tedious. No briefs came to him. Nevertheless he "stoutly" refused to engage touts. With little to occupy him he started a short-lived experiment in "vital food". His friend Virchand Gandhi, who was studying for the Solicitor's examination, joined him. Before the discovery of vitamins, a number of empirical theories had been put forward to explain the loss of nutritional value of food through overcooking. In 1889, Mr A. F. Hills, Chairman of the Vegetarian Society, propounded a theory that cooking impaired the "vitality of the sun's rays, etc." stored up in "natural foods". He recommended taking fruit, nuts, grains and pulses—all raw. This was given the name "vital food". Dr Hills called it "The First Food of Paradise". Mohandas tried it for a week. It agreed with him "very well" at that time and "had I been able to continue it, it would have suited me." But he had to leave off

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because at the time he had to "entertain many friends, and because there were some other social considerations".[14]

With his Brahmin cook to help him he next started making experiments in the English style of vegetarian cookery, "doing half the cooking myself". The cook knew nothing about the art, was perfectly innocent of scriptures and was unsufferably dirty. But as neither of them had any scruple about inter-dining, they pulled together famously. Being asked whether he knew *sandhya* (daily worship) at least, Ravishankar replied that the plough was his *sandhya* and the spade his ritual. So Mohandas became his teacher. "I did not treat him as a servant, but as a member of the family."

Mohandas attended the High Court every day but found that for lack of sufficient knowledge of Indian law, often he could not follow the cases and dozed off. Only the knowledge that others also did the same kept him somewhat in countenance. "After a time, I even lost the sense of shame, as I learnt to think that it was fashionable to doze in the High Court."[15]

At last he was engaged by one Mamibai, defendant in a Small Causes Court case. But when the time came to cross-examine the plaintiff's witnesses, he lost nerve utterly: "I stood up... my heart sank into my boots. My head was reeling and I felt as though the whole court was doing likewise. I could think of no question to ask.... I sat down." He told the agent he could not conduct the case, returned Rs. 30 that he had received as fee and asked him to engage another *vakil*. The client duly engaged another *vakil* for Rs. 51. "To him, of course, the case was a child's play."[16]

Burning with shame, he went home resolved not to take another case till he was sure he could do it justice. He did get another case, however. A poor client approached him as "a worthy son of a worthy father" to draft a memorial for him. He drafted the memorial. The friends, to whom he read it, admired it, but it brought him no money.

6

The prospect seemed gloomy in the extreme. His friend, Virchand Gandhi, kept reeling off long yarns about forensic feats of Pherozeshah Mehta, Badruddin Tyabji and other legal luminaries. It was quite common, he told the youngster, for a novice to "vegetate" for three, five, or even seven years, before he could expect to have a run of the practice and make both ends meet. Mohandas felt utterly demoralised. For a while he thought of going abroad in search of a living. But his brother disapproved of it. He next thought of taking up tuition work, but found none. Expenses kept mounting up. In his desperation he wrote to his friend Ranchhoddas Patwari for a loan, reminding him of the promise he had made. But Patwari pleaded inability. He had

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not enough savings of his own from his practice, he said, and he must not let his father know, in view of the caste ban. "Never mind," Mohandas wrote back on September 5, 1892,

I shall try somewhere else. As I told you in my last p.c., I have to postpone going abroad for practice. My brother is very much against it. He thinks that I need not despair of getting a decent livelihood in Kathyawar and that without directly taking part in the *khutput* (intrigues)....I shall follow his advice. Here, too, I have been promised some work. So I intend to be here for about two months at least.

I do not think my accepting a literary post will materially interfere with my legal studies. On the other hand, such work will add to my knowledge that cannot but be indirectly useful in practice. Moreover, thereby I can work with a more concentrated mind, free from worry, but where is the post? Not an easy thing to get one.

Referring to the excommunication, he continued:

The caste opposition is as great as ever. Everything depends upon one man who will try his best never to allow me to enter the caste. I am not so very sorry for myself as I am for the caste fellows who follow the authority of one man like sheep. They have been passing some meaningless resolutions and betraying their malice clearly in overdoing their part. Religion, of course, finds no place in their arguments. Is it not almost better not to have anything to do with such fellows than to fawn upon them?

Finding one day in the "wanted" columns of a newspaper an advertisement for the job of a teacher to teach English for an hour a day in a high school with the grand salary of Rs. 75 per month, he applied for it.

In due course he was called for an interview. The principal of the school asked him:

"Are you a graduate?"

"No. But I have matriculated from the London University."

"Right enough, but we want a graduate."

"I had Latin as my second subject," Mohandas put in, hoping this at least would impress him.

He was dismissed with. "Thank you, this will do. Now you can go."

Dumbfounded, he returned home crestfallen.

His experience was by no means atypical of India of his day. It was the India of Dadabhai Naoroji, Gokhale and Vivekananda, an India in which indigenous talent even of the highest order was driven, owing to contracting opportunities under foreign rule, into a grim struggle for existence. The Grand Old Man began life as "Head Native Assistant Master" in a school, Vivekananda, to put it in his own words, "almost died of hunger", as he wandered in search of employment from "office to office, repulsed on all sides." Gokhale started as a Professor of History and Economics in a Deccan College on a salary of Rs. 70 a month; the

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Mahatma to-be failed to secure even a Rs. 75 worth school teacher's job!

Mohandas consulted his brother. After six months in Bombay, he wound up his establishment and went back to Rajkot. With the help of his brother, who was a petty *vakil*, he was here at last able by drafting memorials and petitions to average Rs. 300 per month. But he had to give in in the matter of not paying any commission to which he had so uncompromisingly adhered in Bombay. His brother was working in partnership with another *vakil*. He argued the two cases were different. In Bombay commission had to be paid to the touts; here this had to be paid to the *vakils* who provided briefs. In his own case the question of commission did not arise, as they had a common purse and he automatically got his share when Mohandas brought in his fees. But what about his partner? Mohandas yielded to this argument. "I was taken in.... To put it bluntly, I deceived myself...."

This was the first occasion of its kind—likewise the last. He never again faltered.

In a tiny *Guide to London*, which he wrote a year later, as a postscript to his own struggle for a career in law, he warned the would-be barristers:

> If you have Rs. 10,000, keep them. Only spend out of them 6,000 Rs. or the equivalent of 420£. And the rest you will be able to command on your return to India....
>
> It is absolutely necessary that you should have some money, Rs. 1,000, Rs. 2,000 or any such sum at your disposal. Then you would not regret having gone to England....For there is no work awaiting you on your return. There may be empty honours and congratulations just to sting you. Even if there be work, perhaps without a knowledge of practice you will not be able to accept it. Therefore if you would take the advice of one who has undergone the bitter experience and would profit by it, if you have 10,000 Rs. only, spend 420£ worth and keep the rest to be spent in India and you would be happy and contented. No one would point his finger at you....And in two years or so according to abilities and opportunities you would be able to establish yourself as a respectable Barrister....Indeed, if you do not expect to command about 2,000 Rs. on your return, it were advisable not to go to England at all for a Barrister's education.

He might have continued to drift in this way, who can tell for how long, had not an incident occurred about this time, that gave to his career an altogether different turn. The young Rana Bhavsingh, before he ascended the *gaddi*, had, it was alleged, removed some jewels from the State's treasury without authority. Someone had whispered in the Political Agent's ear that he had done it on the suggestion of Mohandas's brother Lakshmidas, who was then secretary and adviser to the young prince; that in any case Lakshmidas knew of it, and since he did not report it,

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he was accessory after the fact, if not before. His brother asked Mohandas to put in a word for him with the Political Agent, E.C.K. (afterwards Sir Charles) Ollivant, K.C.I.E.; Mohandas agreed to do so, though not without some misgivings. He had chanced upon this officer once in England and found him to be friendly. But the struggling barrister soon found that "Kathiawar was different from England" and "an officer on leave was not the same as an officer on duty".[17] In his capacity as an official he was an arrogant and short-tempered *pucca sahib*, as the phrase went. Besides he was prejudiced against Lakshmidas. As soon as Mohandas mentioned his business, he stiffened up, told him his brother was an "intriguer" and that he did not wish to hear anything about the matter.

Mohandas tried to explain. The *sahib* lost patience, got up and said, he had no time. "You must go now," he brusquely added.

Mohandas entreated the official to hear him out. The Englishman called his chaprasi and told him to show the pertinacious visitor the door.

The peon came and pushed out Mohandas by the shoulder.

Furious at this insult, Mohandas wrote that he would sue the officer for "assault and battery".

He could please himself, the *sahib* wrote back.

Mohandas consulted Pherozeshah Mehta, who happened at that time to be in Rajkot on legal business. "Tell Gandhi," the Lion of Bombay sent word through a friend, "that he is still fresh from England and hot-blooded. . . . If he would earn something and have an easy time here, let him tear up the note and pocket the insult. He will gain nothing by proceeding against the *sahib* . . . he has yet to know life."[18]

Mohandas pocketed the insult and vowed never again to put himself in such a false position by trying to "exploit friendship like this". The shock changed the course of his life.

7

Racial arrogance stalked India. In the Indian States the Political Agent was all in all. His will was law. Practical-minded Kathiawar had, in the face of utter helplessness, made a philosophy almost of accommodation and compromise. In a celebrated Gujarati novel, that has become a classic, a wily old politician, matured in the traditional Kathiawar school of diplomacy, rebukes a youngster for his idealism as follows:

"You, young bloods, pooh-pooh wordly wisdom, look down upon the virtue of obedience, make a fetish of independence. What you need is to *discipline your conscience.* The bane of modern education, and particularly of English education is that it breeds in the youth intellectual arrogance. . . and discontent. It fills them with a hankering for quick . . . big results.

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They scorn docility as bondage, subordination of their judgment to the experience of old age as humiliation; glorify wilfulness as independence; blurt out their innermost thoughts and call it courage; scoff at experience; are thin-skinned and hyper-sensitive; lack respect for tradition. . . . They need to be broken in by being put for a couple of years under a strong-willed, heavy-handed, choleric oldtimer, who would teach them submission and knock all nonsense out of them." (Italics mine)

To Mohandas, all this was gall and wormwood. If he practised in Rajkot, he would inevitably come in collision with the Political Agent. Having threatened to proceed against him, he was in no mood to eat humble pie, much less to curry favour with him.

There was but one alternative—get a job. To obtain a Prime Ministership or a Judgeship he would have to have powerful backing. Kathiawar was notorious for its intrigues. Diplomacy in princely Kathiawar was as crooked as the proverbial turns of the Kathiawari turban and in later years Gandhiji had some very hard things to say about "the land of the intrepid Kathis", where "brother is ready to cut his brother's throat for a half penny". Hardly anybody came out of it unscathed and unsoiled. Ota Bapa had, by his moral genius, emerged from it unsullied but not unscathed; Kaba Gandhi carried deep scars, and since his day things had changed very much for the worse. British paramountcy had become the upas tree in whose shadow only rank weeds flourished. With princes reduced to the position of mere figure-heads without power or responsibility, and the yoke of British paramountcy firmly settled on their shoulders, decadence and degeneration had become the order of the day. British policy in regard to these States was to keep them "without power but as instruments of royal policy".

"Scindia and Holkar are faithful to us," wrote Lord Elgin, who succeeded Lord Canning in 1862, "in proportion as they are weak and conscious that they require our aid to support them against their own subjects and neighbours."[19] In pursuance of this policy, British authority turned the blind eye to the misdeeds of the ruling chiefs in relation to their subjects and to their personal vices, so long as these did not attain the proportion of a scandal and the Chiefs faithfully discharged their obligations towards the Crown. The Princes on their part, knowing full well that a breath of British power could unmake them as a breath had made, were in proportion as they were self-willed, arbitrary and capricious in their dealings with their subjects, deferential and obsequious towards British authority, its representative the Political Agent, his subordinates and even his chaprasis, dreading his cold eye as a truant schoolboy does his stern schoolmaster's. Mohandas had heard of it. He now had direct experience of it. Whichever way he turned, his quarrel with the Political Agent barred the way. The atmosphere reeked of sycophancy and intrigue. He felt choked.

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It was now nearly eighteen months since he had returned to India. The Porbandar State had been under Administration since Rana Vikmatji was deposed in 1886, owing to "continued misrule". Bhavsinghji, the grandson of Rana Vikmatji, the heir-apparent, was then a minor. Mohandas had come to Porbandar to obtain some more powers for him. F. S. P. Lely, the Administrator, feeling that the young Rana needed some wholesome company, appointed Mohandas as his companion-tutor and made arrangements for his stay in Chaubari bungalow at Porbandar. Mohandas stayed there for some time but soon found that there was little or nothing there that he could do. He also tried, but without success, to secure justice to the Mers—a kind of feudal militia enjoying a number of privileges and immunities in Porbandar State—who had been subjected to an oppressive *vighoti* (land tax). The Indian officer with whom the matter rested was even more supercilious, arbitrary and overbearing than the European Administrator, and the Political Agent was content to follow the British bureaucratic tradition of leaving all such unsavoury chores entirely to the "man on the spot". The procedure suited him perfectly.

Mohandas was disgusted. Life was a jigsaw puzzle. Try how he would, the crazy pieces would not fit one into the other. Wearied and worried, he nevertheless doggedly went on.

Help came at last—help of a totally unexpected kind and from a quarter of which he could never have dreamed. His brother, even more wearied and worried, heard from a Meman firm of Porbandar that had built an extensive business in South Africa. They needed a barrister or a *vakil* for a year in a big case, involving nearly £ 40,000. The fee would be £ 105 with free first-class passage both ways and all expenses paid during the stay abroad. Mohandas was tempted if only because it would enable him to see a foreign land.

But when he discussed with Sheth Abdul Karim Jhaveri, a partner of Dada Abdulla & Co., the firm in question, the nature of the work he was expected to do, he was told that he would have to instruct their counsel and make himself useful in disposing of the firm's English correspondence. This was a clerk's job, not a barrister's, he felt. He jibbed at it. But to escape somehow from the atmosphere that was fairly choking him, he swallowed his pride and closed with the offer. What was seized as an escape turned out to be the making of a world career.

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Gandhiji's Residence at 52 Bayswater, London, (March 1891).



KASTURBA



Entrance to Gandhiji's room "Happy days of consciousness that we were helping to make the world better" (page 262).

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PORTSMOUTH MISSION.

On Tuesday, at 10.30, the delegates began to assemble in the "Pyramid" Room of the Upper Albert Hall, Portsmouth, but it was not until some time after 11 that business was commenced.

In the uvavoidable absence of Mr. A. F. Hills, owing to the dangerous illness of his father, the President of the Local Society (Mr. Prior) was invited to take the chair. Among those present were the delegates and friends from the Vegetarian Society (Rev. Jas. Clarke, Mr. and Mrs. Harrison, Mr. and Mrs Foxcroft, Mr. Joseph Knight), from the London Vegetarian Society (Mr. Josiah Oldfield, Mr. M. K. Gandhi, Mr. T. T. Mojumdar, Miss Yates), from Oxford, Cambridge (Mr. Box), Southampton, Exeter (Mr. Chudleigh), West London (Mr. O'Callaghan), South East London (Mr. Welch), Mrs. and Miss Godbold, Mr. and Mrs. Pearce, Mr. Shelton, Mr. Wood, and others.

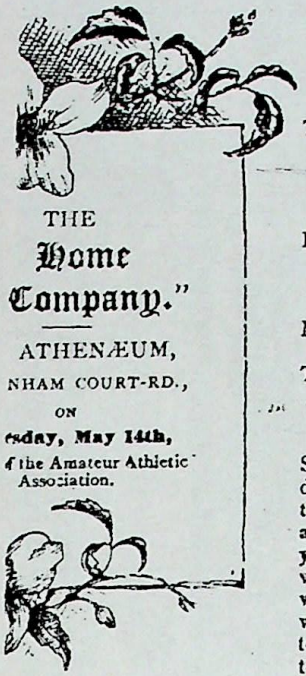
The Secretary having read the minutes of the last meeting, and the financial statement showing a balance in hand of a few pounds having been adopted, the report of the work done during the preceding six months was received with applause, which was followed by the Cambridge delegate amusingly questioning the accuracy of the Secretary's quotation from Milton. Nobody knew whether it was right or wrong, and the Secretary having promised to look it out, the report was adopted.

When "questions" came on, Mr. Oldfield asked what could be done to bring the Federal Union into touch with the Health Congress, to be held in September? He suggested a resolution, which was duly carried, that the committee of the Congress be approached with the object of getting the Federal Union represented. Mr. Knight stated that the Vegetarian Society had already made an application, and Miss Yates that the London Vegetarian Society had done the same.

The passing of this resolution raised an interesting discussion, in which Mr. Welch, Mr. Knight, and the Oxford representative took chief part, as to the relation of Vegetarianism to the Medical Profession. The tendency of the meeting was distinctly in favour of appreciating the self-denying work done by the profession, and trying to win them over to sympathy.

The important discussion on the resolutions which came before the Conference, will be given in our next. After the morning sitting an adjournment took place to the Vegetarian Restaurant in Queen-street, where Mr. Wood very kindly put his rooms at the disposal of the visitors, and spread a capital dinner of soup, savouries, puddings and fruit.

Then a Vegetarian friend took a photograph of the group, the humorous details connected with this, our comic correspondent promises to supply for next issue.



meet under L.V.S. flag ten minutes earlier. Those going should send post card to J. Hayward three days before, The Waverley, 26, High-street, Borough.

PORTSMOUTH MISSION.

Federal Union Fixtures.

Thursday, May 7th.—Afternoon, Ladies Meeting, Pelham-road Hall, Southsea, 3.30. Evening, Congregational School-room, Buckland, Portsmouth, at 8. Evening, Bible Christian School-room, Brougham-road, Southsea, at 8.

Friday, May 8th.—Evening, Baptist School-room, Lake-road, Landport, at 8.15. Wesleyan School-room, George-street, Buckland, at 8. Primitive Methodist School-room, Stamshaw, at 7.30.

Monday, May 11th.—Evening, Salvation Army Fortress, Albert-road, Southsea, at 7.30.

Tuesday, May 12th.—Evening, Baptist School-room, Commercial-road, Landport, at 8.

THE Registrar General reports that for the week ending Saturday, May 2nd, in London 2,507 births, and 2,006 deaths were registered. Allowing for increase of population, the births were 314 below, and the deaths 334 above the average numbers in the corresponding weeks of the last ten years. The annual death-rate per 1,000 from all causes, which had been 20.0, 20.5, and 21.0 in the preceding three weeks, further rose last week to 23.3. Thirty-seven deaths were primarily attributed to influenza. The deaths referred to diseases of the respiratory organs were 588, or 219 above the corrected average. As in recent weeks, the greater part of the excess was under the heading of pneumonia.

The afternoon sitting was prolonged till 6 p.m. Then the delegates separated with the consciousness that their serious labours were over.

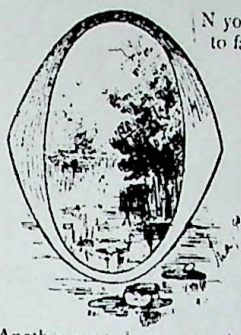
7 p.m. the large hall was fairly well filled by a good representative gathering for the conversazione.

Full details of this and of the following day's work, by the Vegetarian Society are not yet to hand on going to press.

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Mr. Gandhi's Narrative,

(Concluded.)



"IN your arrival in England of course you were face to face with the flesh eating problem, how did you solve it?"

"I was overwhelmed with gratuitous advice. Well meaning yet ignorant friends thrust their opinions into unwilling ears. The majority of them said I could not do without meat in the cold climate. I would catch consumption. Mr. Z. went to England and caught it on account of his foolhardiness. Others said I might do without flesh but without wine I could not move. I would be numbed with cold. One went so far as to advise me to take eight bottles of whisky for I should want them after leaving Aden. Another wanted me to smoke, for his friend was obliged to smoke in England. Even medical men, those who had been to England said the same tale. But as I wanted to come at any price, I replied that I would try my best to avoid all these things, but if they were found to be absolutely necessary I did not know what I should do. I may here mention that my aversion to meat was not so strong then as it is now. I was even betrayed into taking meat about six or seven times at the period when I allowed my friends to think for me. But in the steamer my ideas began to change, I thought I should not take meat on any account. My mother before consenting to my departure exacted a promise from me not to take meat. So I was bound not to take it, if only for the sake of the promise. The fellow passengers in the steamer began to advise us (the friend who was with me and myself), to try it.

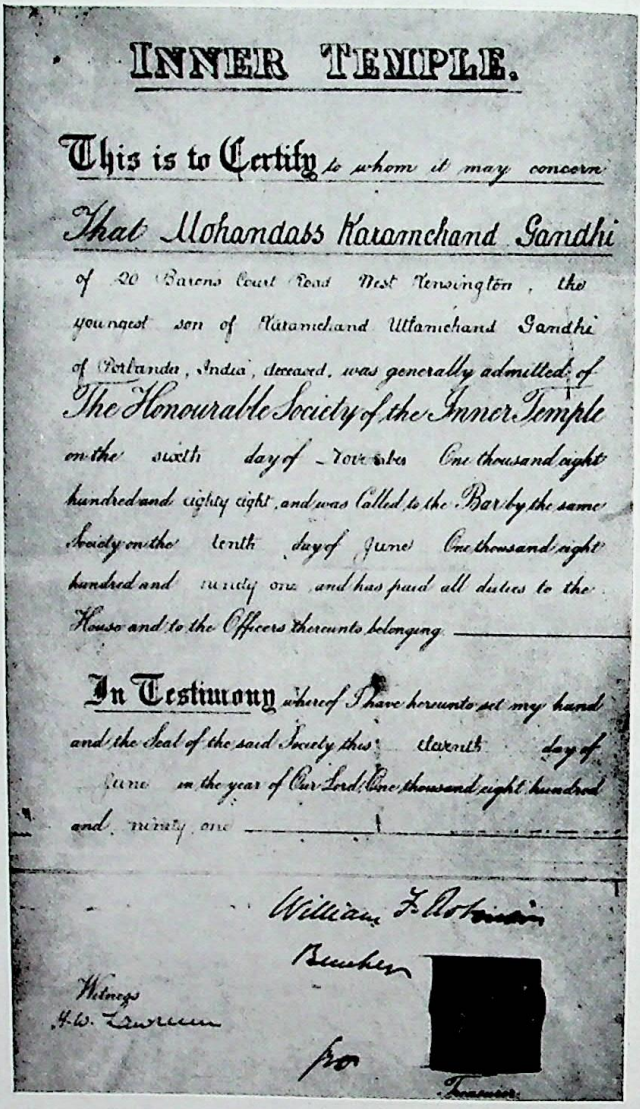
They said I would require it after leaving Aden. When this turned out untrue I was to require it after crossing the Red Sea. And on this proving false, a fellow-passenger said, "The weather has not been severe, but in the Bay of Biscay you will have to choose between death, and meat, and wine." That crisis too passed away safely. In London, too, I had to hear such remonstrances. For months I did not come across any Vegetarian. I passed many anxious days arguing with a friend about the sufficiency of the vegetable diet; but at that time having but little knowledge of arguments other than humanitarian in favour of Vegetarianism, I got the worst of it, as the friend scouted the idea of humanity in such discussions. At last I sealed his tongue by telling him I would sooner die than break the promise to my mother. "Hump," said he, "childishness, rank superstition, but since even after coming here you are superstitious enough to believe in such nonsense, I cannot help you any more, I only wish you had not come to England."

He never afterwards pressed the point seriously, except perhaps once, though ever since that he took me for little more than a fool. In the meanwhile I remembered once to have passed by a Vegetarian restaurant (it was the "Porridge Bowl)." I asked a gentleman to direct me there, but instead of reaching there I saw the "Central," restaurant, and went there and had some porridge for the first time. I did not at first enjoy it, but I liked the pie which I had for the second course. It was there that I first bought some Vegetarian literature among which was a copy of "A Plea for Vegetarianism," by H. S. Salt, after reading which I adopted Vegetarianism from principle.

Till then I considered flesh to be a superior diet from a scientific point of view. Moreover, it was there that I came to know the existence of the Vegetarian Society of Manchester. But I did not take any active interest in it. I did now and then read the *Vegetarian Messenger* and that was all. My knowledge of *The Vegetarian* dates from a year and a half. It was at the International Vegetarian Congress that I may be said to have known the L.V.S. That the Congress was sitting I knew by the kind courtesy of Mr. Josiah Oldfield, who heard of me from a friend, and was good enough to ask me to attend it. In conclusion I am bound to say that during my nearly three years' stay in England I have left many things undone, and have done many things which perhaps I might better have left undone, yet I carry one great consolation with me that I shall go back without having taken meat or wine, and that I know from personal experience that there are so many Vegetarians in England.

THREE] Concluding portion of Gandhiji's interview to the *Vegetarian* at the end of his stay in England from the *Vegetarian* of June 20, 1891: "I carry one great consolation with me that I shall go back without having taken meat or wine and that I know . . . that there are so many vegetarians in England." (page 269).

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INNER TEMPLE.

This is to Certify to whom it may concern

That Mohandass Karamchand Gandhi

of 20 Barons Court Road West Kensington, the

youngest son of Karamchand Uttamchand Gandhi

of Porbanda, India, deceased, was generally admitted of

The Honourable Society of the Inner Temple

on the sixth day of November One thousand eight

hundred and eighty eight, and was Called to the Bar by the same

Society on the tenth day of June One thousand eight

hundred and ninety one, and has paid all duties to the

House and to the Officers thereunto belonging.

In Testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand

and the Seal of the said Society this eleventh day of

June in the year of Our Lord One thousand eight hundred

and ninety one.

William F. Robinson

Bencher

[redacted]

Witness

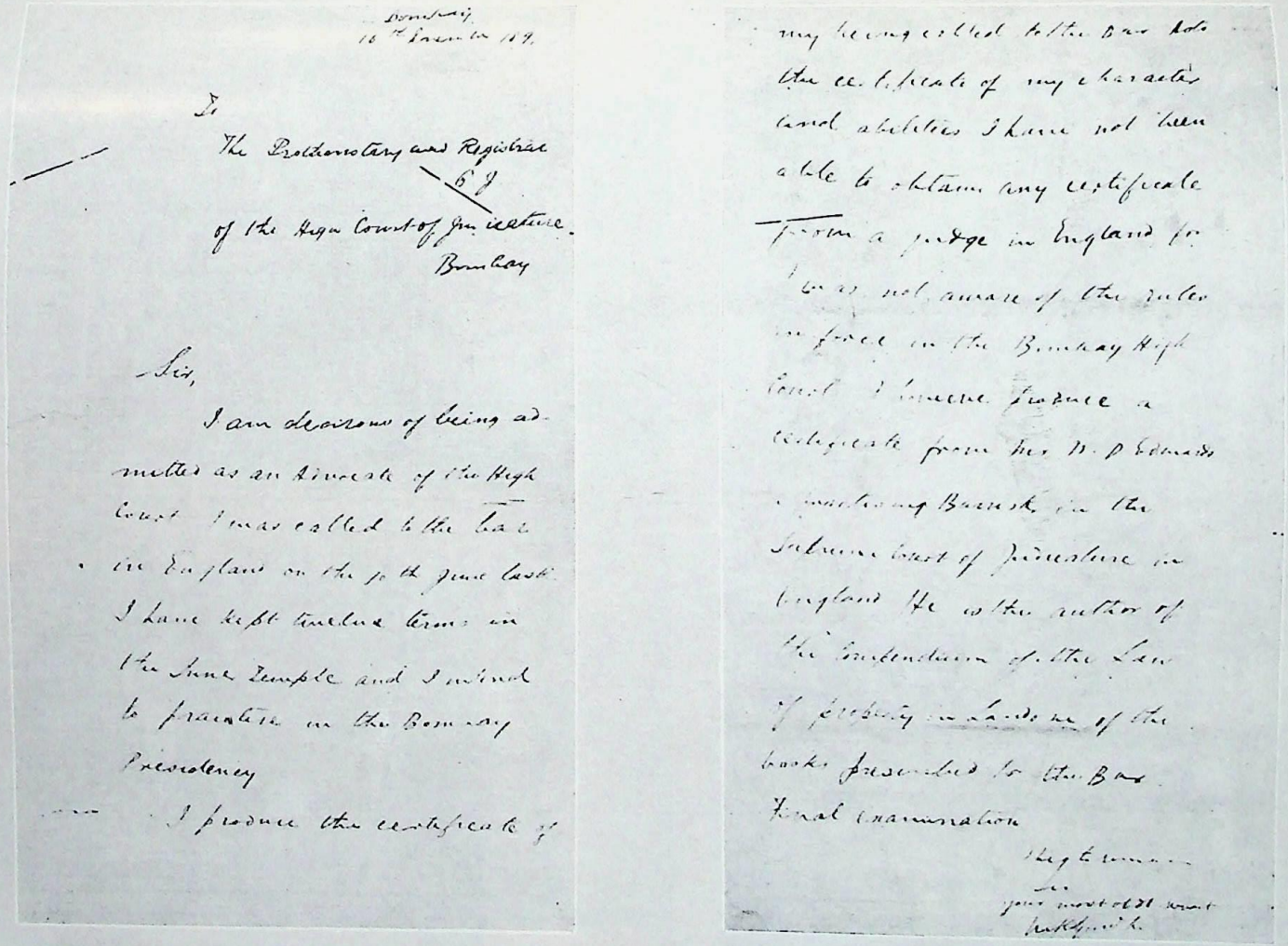
H. W. Lawrence

for

Treasurer.

FOUR] Gandhiji's Bar-at-law certificate.

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Bombay,
16th December 91.

To

The Prothonotary and Registrar
of
The High Court of Judicature
Bombay

Sir,

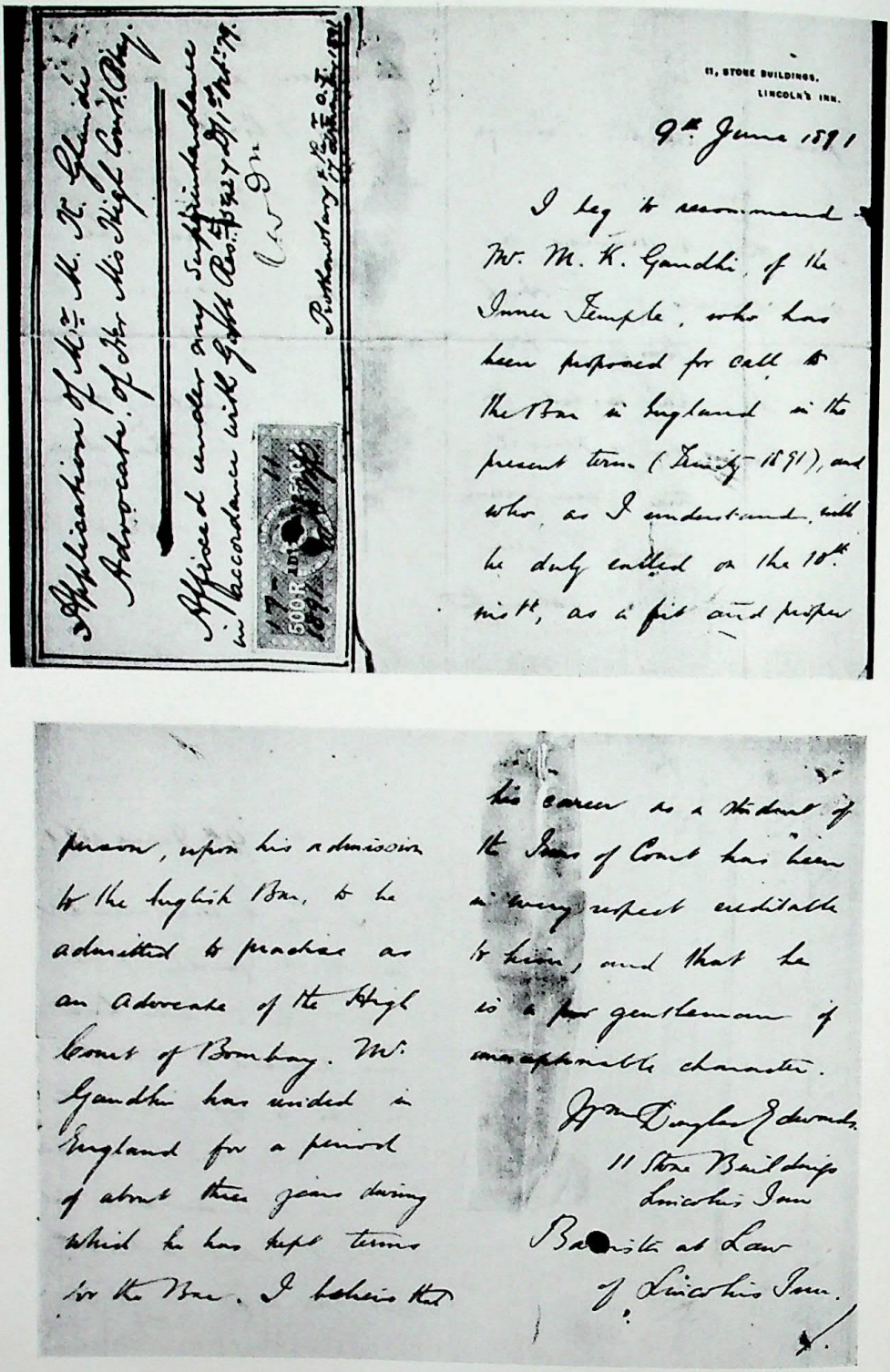
I am desirous of being admitted as an Advocate of the High Court. I was called to the bar in England on the 10th June last. I have kept twelve terms in the Inner Temple and I intend to practise in the Bombay Presidency.

I produce the certificate of my having been called to the Bar and the certificate of my character and abilities. I have not been able to obtain any certificate from a judge in England for I was not aware of the rules in force in the Bombay High Court. I however produce a certificate from Mr. D. Edwards a practising Barrister in the Supreme Court of Judicature in England. He is the author of the Intermediate of the Law of Property in Lower of the books prescribed for the Bar Final Examination.

I am
Sir
Your most obedient servant
M. K. Gandhi

FIVE] Gandhiji's application for enrolment as an Advocate in the Bombay High Court, November 16, 1891.

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Application of Mr. M. K. Gandhi
Advocate of the Hon'ble High Court Bombay.

Affixed under my Signature and Seal
in accordance with Sec. 6 of Act XVII of 1879.

Bombay 27th Jan. 1891.

11, STORE BUILDINGS,
LINCOLN'S INN.

9th June 1891

I beg to recommend Mr. M. K. Gandhi of the Inner Temple, who has been proposed for call to the Bar in England in the present term (Trinity 1891), and who, as I understand, will be duly called on the 10th inst., as a fit and proper person, upon his admission to the English Bar, to be admitted to practise as an Advocate of the High Court of Bombay. Mr. Gandhi has resided in England for a period of about three years during which he has kept terms for the Bar. I believe that his career as a student of the Inns of Court has been in every respect creditable to him, and that he is a true gentleman of unimpeachable character.

J. M. Douglas Edwards.
11 Store Buildings
Lincolns Inn
Barrister at Law
of Lincolns Inn.

Letter of recommendation by Edwards, Bar-at-Law, Lincolns Inn, appended to Gandhiji's application for enrolment as an Advocate in the Bombay High Court.

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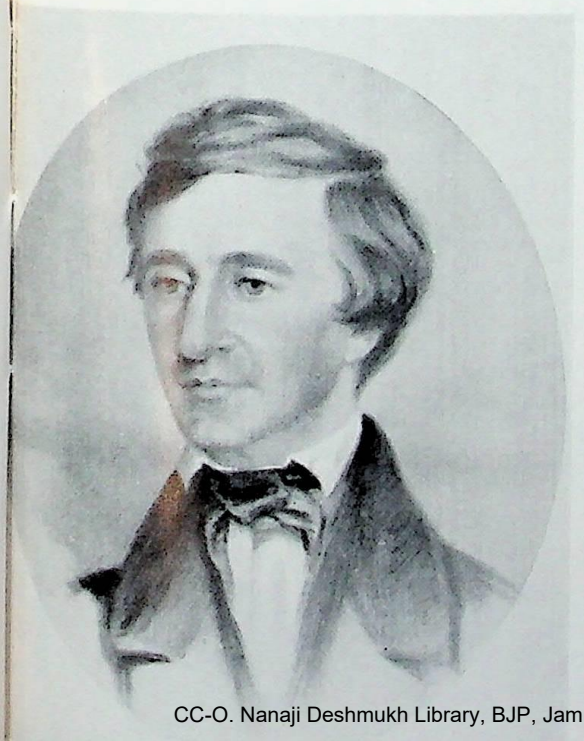
Dec. 1931.
Rome

To dear Mahatma Gandhi a drawing
I did from my father the last year of
his life. Cordially, affectionately and respectfully
yours
Tolstoy

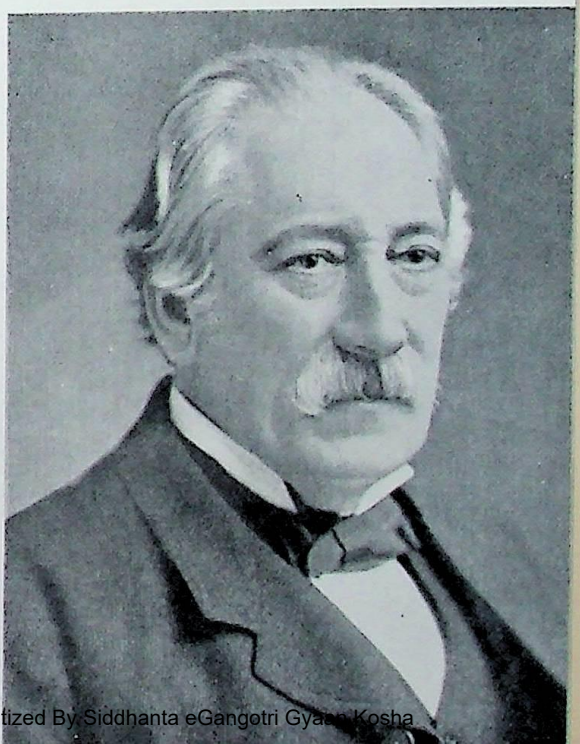
Count Leo Tolstoy (1828 — 1910)

SEVEN] THREE WESTERN THINKERS

Henry David Thoreau. (1817-1862)



Edward Maitland (1824-1897)



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THIRD ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Esoteric Christian Union.

(FOUNDED NOVEMBER, 1891.)



THE work of the Society in the past year has been carried on upon the same lines as in the preceding years, but on an enhanced scale and with increased publicity. Considerably over a score of lectures, addresses, and expositions have been delivered by the President, in London and elsewhere, to audiences, some of which were public, and numerous articles by him, also expository of the New Interpretation, which it is the purpose of the Society to make known, have found wide circulation and favourable reception in various periodicals, among which are *The Agnostic Journal*, *The Vegetarian*, *Light*, and *The Unknown World*.

The establishment of the magazine last named has met a great and long felt want for an organ devoted exclusively to mystical and occult subjects, and the appearance of *The Unknown World*, under an Editor specially qualified for the conduct of it, is a matter for high gratulation with all persons interested in the spread of esoteric philosophy and spiritual science.

The past year has also witnessed the dissemination on an enlarged scale, by gift, loan, or sale, of the Society's publications, and the books regarded by it as the best exponents of the principles and teachings it was formed to promote. The number thus distributed has exceeded 2,500, and the result of the correspondence involved has been in the highest degree satisfactory, as showing the growing ability and readiness of the public to recognise and welcome the new light thus rendered accessible to them.

Another token afforded by the past year of the world's growing accessibility to pure spiritual influence, and of the sufficiency of the New Interpretation to meet the demand thus created, consists in the publication at Athens of a book written in Greek by a citizen and scholar of that city, M. Plato E. Drakoules, bearing the significant title, "Light from Within," and having for its express purpose the introduction to the Greek Church and world, of the books recognized by the Society as the chief text-books of the New Interpretation, as representing the restoration of the ancient esoteric philosophy prophesied as to take place at the end of the age, and to interpret all the mysteries of religion.

But a few years have elapsed since it was declared by a deputation, which came from America expressly to obtain information respecting the genesis of these same books, that they were transforming religious thought in the United States in the most desirable sense.

According to quite recent advices this process has made such advance, that whereas previously the higher culture of that country for serious and thoughtful persons was based first on the writings of Thomas Carlyle and, next, on those of Ruskin, it now is based on "The Perfect Way" and "Clothed with the Sun," the readers of which find them as satisfying to the soul as the former were gratifying to the mind.

In Rome also a centre has been formed for the circulation of these books in common with others of like spiritual character, by means of a lending library devoted exclusively to that class of literature; and there is a prospect of the translation, in part at least, of the former into Italian. In Belfast, Ireland, and Durban, South Africa, also, centres have been established for the same purpose; the active spirit of the movement in the latter place being a Hindoo gentleman who is practising there as a lawyer. His report of the progress made, and interest excited thus far, is most encouraging, as also are the proofs thus afforded of the real catholicity of the Christianity propounded in place of that which hitherto has held possession under the name of Christianity.

The following is a noteworthy instance of the sufficiency of the key now restored to unlock difficulties other than those purely religious, but which have arisen out of false interpretations of religion.

One of the chief obstacles to the growing recognition of women as entitled to an equal share of legislative power with men, arises from the sacerdotal objection founded on the legend that the Fall was due to the act of *a* woman. Some members of the Parliamentary Committee for Women's Suffrage had, however, heard of the very different construction placed by the New Interpretation on the legend in question, and accordingly invited the President of the Society to expound the subject to a meeting specially convened for the

EIGHT] The Annual Report of the Esoteric Christian Union for 1899, appreciating Gandhiji's services. "The active spirit . . .in . . .(S. Africa) being a Hindu gentleman who is practising there as a lawyer." *(page 443)*

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S.N. 201
L.N. 137

They are not —
They are badly treated —
Have had Indians
for years and
never a case
Court

Beach Grove,
Durban, 1894

SIR,

I venture to send you the enclosed for perusal, and solicit your opinion on the subject matter of the open letter.

Whether you be a clergyman, editor, public man, merchant, or lawyer, the subject cannot but demand your attention. If you are a clergyman, inasmuch as you represent the teaching of Jesus, it must be your duty to see that you are in no way directly or indirectly countenancing a treatment of your fellow-beings that would not be pleasing to Jesus. If you are an editor of a newspaper, the responsibility is equally great. Whether you are using your influence as a journalist to the evolution or degradation of humanity will depend upon whether you are encouraging division among class and class or striving after union. The same remarks will apply to you as a public man. If you are a merchant or lawyer, you have then, too, a duty to discharge towards your customers and clients from whom you derive a considerable pecuniary advantage. It is for you to treat them as dogs or fellow-beings demanding your sympathy in the cruel persecution that they are put to owing to the prevalent ignorance about the Indians in the Colony. Coming as you do in comparatively close contact with them, you have, no doubt, the opportunity and incentive to study them. Looked at from a sympathetic standpoint, they would perhaps show themselves to you as they have been seen by scores and hundreds of Europeans who had the opportunity to study them, and who used it aright.

Your opinion is solicited with a view to ascertain if there are any Europeans in the Colony who would actively sympathise with and feel for the Indians in the Colony, assuming that their treatment is not all that could be desired.

I am, Sir,

Your faithful Servant,

M. K. GANDHI.

Not adhered to
Don't know
Keep the matter
to ourselves

S.N. 3571
L.N. 1

The Indian Franchise.

AN APPEAL

To every Briton in South Africa.



DURBAN:
T. L. CULLINGWORTH, PRINTER, 40, FIELD STREET.
1895.

S.N. 3571
L.N. 1

The Indian Franchise.

AN APPEAL

To every Briton in South Africa.



DURBAN:
T. L. CULLINGWORTH, PRINTER, 40, FIELD STREET.
1895.

NINE] Typical reactions of the South African whites to Gandhiji's Open Letter scribbled on the covering note to the same (Left), and to his Appeal To Every Briton in South Africa.

P. O. Box 66.

M. K. GANDHI,
ADVOCATE.

Agent for
THE ESOTERIC CHRISTIAN UNION
AND
THE LONDON VEGETARIAN SOCIETY.

2254

Central West Street,

Durban, 1- 3 1896

Natal.

The Hon'ble Dadabhai
Naoroji
National Liberal Club
London

Sir,

I venture to enclose herewith a petition concerning the franchise Bill that the ministry proposes to introduce next session & a press copy of my letter to the Chairman of the British committee.

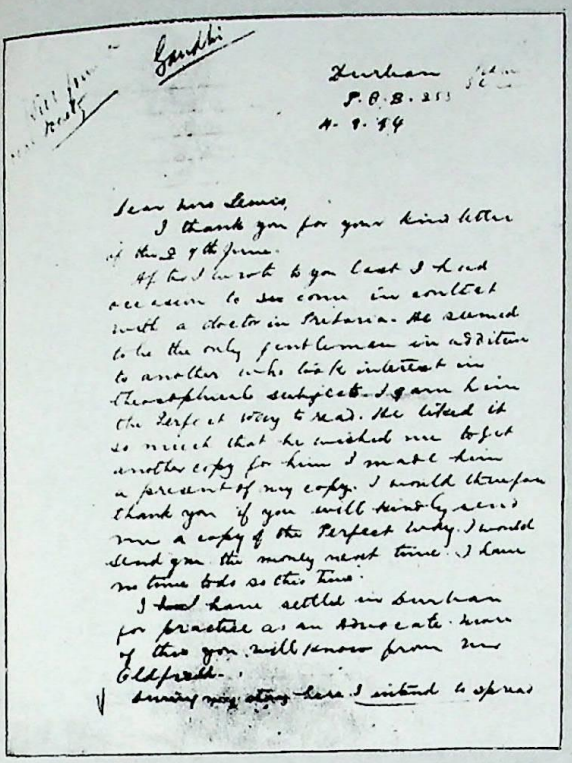
The Governor of Tasmania has refused to grant the request of the Premier which regarding Natal Government I am now preparing a memorial for the Home Government on the subject.

I hope to have your memorial. I shall be very glad to receive your letter about the petition.

Yours truly
M. K. Gandhi

Gandhiji's letter to Dadabhai Naoroji. His letter-head now bore the inscription: "M. K. Gandhi, Agent for the Esoteric Christian Union and The London Vegetarian Society." (page 325)

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Gandhi

Durham
P.O.B. 213
4.9.89

Dear Mrs Lewis,

I thank you for your kind letter of the 2 9th June.

If the book to you lent I should presume to see some one connected with a doctor in Britannia. He seemed to be the only gentleman in addition to another who took interest in theosophical subjects. I gave him the Perfect Way to read. He liked it so much that he wished me to get another copy for him & made him a present of my copy. I would therefore thank you if you will kindly send me a copy of the Perfect Way. I would send you the money next time. I have no time to do so this time.

I had have settled in Durham for practice as an Advocate. More of this you will know from Mrs Coldfield.

During my stay here I intend to spread

as much as possible my views about theosophy (To me there is little difference between Theosophy & Western Christianity). I have written sundry letters to the President of the Vegetarian Society and hope to succeed.

I propose that the B.C.U. should send me a selection of books to be sold here. I would sell the books at cost price plus the postage and 5 o/o commission to be kept by me. The price however I should be left free to use my discretion. I would send up the sale proceeds of the books every three months. The advertisement charges will be borne by me. If at the end of one year nothing is sold I would return the books at my cost. I give my personal guarantee for the safe keeping of the books and the sale proceeds. 5 copies of the Perfect Way 5 of Cloaked with the Sun and 10 of the New Gospel of Interpretation and other books may be sent to me. If sufficient interest is evoked I would add on the advertising charges also to the

cost price. The cost price of the books should be stated in each case as in the letter of instruction.

If it is necessary to read the letter or a portion thereof to the Union you can do so. I hope you will be able to persuade the Union to or those who in authority to accede to the above proposal.

If you do not think much of the book: what position is the book to occupy in respectable literature? If the author has written what is absolutely true from personal observation, the book cannot be lightly treated. If it is an attempt to delude the people into a belief in real truths by fascinating falsehood the book deserves the highest condemnation possible. For we will not learn truth by means of falsehoods. Of course I write this without the slightest disrespect for the author of whom I know nothing she may be a lady of the highest probity and truth. I only repeat that to disparage the book one

agree entirely with the author's character is absolutely necessary.

I could get many signatures to the petition you enclosed. But I am afraid the Natal signatures would be quite useless. Is it not a sad commentary on the morality of the age that a most important and yet most harmless and elevating petition should not receive good support? At times when I think of these things I get thoroughly despair of fruits of work. I mean from the Bhagavad Gita comes from utter despair and consequent inaction - a more indirect way to freedom from attachment to fruits of work.

With respects to
I am
Yours sincerely
M.K. Gandhi

Please note change of address
M.K.G.

Gandhiji's letter to Mrs Lewis: "We will not learn truth by means of falsehood." (page 326).

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PART THREE
RENDEZVOUS WITH DESTINY

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CHAPTER XIII

UNWELCOME VISITOR

1

MOHANDAS HAD tried to run away from difficulties but difficulties pursued him. Usually there was plenty of accommodation available for first class passengers on boats for South Africa. But it so happened that the Governor of Mozambique with his entourage was also travelling by the same boat and all first class berths on the steamer were in consequence booked up. When Mohandas asked Dada Abdulla's Agent to purchase for him a first class ticket he was told none was available. Unless he went as a deck passenger he must be prepared to be stranded indefinitely in Bombay, as there was no certainty as to the next sailing.

Mohandas was in a quandary. For a budding barrister to travel on deck in those days of first-class travel was unthinkable. Nothing daunted he sought out the Captain of the ship to see what personal charm could do. "Could not you possibly squeeze me in?" he asked putting on his best debonair air.

Struck by his self-confident, youthful appearance the master mariner surveyed him "from head to foot and smiled". There was only one way, he said. He could give him an extra berth in his own cabin, not usually available for passengers.

"Thank you, it will do for me," answered the young Mohandas and forthwith purchased a first class ticket.

In April, 1893, he set sail for the Dark Continent full of zest. A flood of thoughts, feelings and memories surged through his mind as the ship steamed out of the harbour. He was now twenty-four. He had just begun to settle down to a steady practice. Two years of struggle with the hard realities of life in India had mellowed him. His relations with his wife had improved. She at last had begun to understand him and he her. But his innate restlessness would not let him settle down to a quiet contented householder's life.

He thought of his home hallowed by the sweet memories of his sainted mother, who had been the hub of his inner universe, the pole-star that had guided his footsteps in the dark mazes of the world—particularly since his father's death. He thought of his wife who had recently presented him with another son, and whom he was leaving behind. He thought of the idyll of domestic bliss that might have been his—if only he could have come to terms with the conditions, such as they were, at

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home. Instead he had chosen to follow the inner urge to try his luck in the distant South Africa.

In latter years he was to describe Africa as "that God-forsaken Continent where I found my God". But at the time he had no idea what the future had in store for him. All he knew was that he must quit the place where he could not live without lowering his standards. For the rest he did not care where the wind of destiny carried him.

The wrench of parting, this time, had not been so great as on the previous occasion. Though physically no more, his mother had become a part and parcel of his being. She was with him in the spirit always. Only, she did not tie him down to his home any more. His conjugal love, after its early tumultuous phase, had entered on the threshold of a spiritual companionship in which physical separation made not much difference. Besides, as he had told his wife, he was not going to stay in Africa for ever; they would surely be meeting in an year's time. The assurance had soothed her somewhat.

He and the captain took to each other from the very start. The Captain taught him to play chess, of which he was very fond, as he needed a companion in the game during the long, monotonous voyage.

At Lamu, the first place on the Kenya coast, where the boat touched, Mohandas with some other passengers went ashore for sight-seeing. "Take care, and return in time; the harbour is treacherous," the ship's captain warned them when they left. Disregarding the captain's warning they took their time ashore. When they returned, the tide was running high and the current was so strong that their heavily overloaded boat could scarcely be held against the ship's ladder. The ship's first whistle had already blown and it was time for the steamer to leave. The captain delayed the departure of the ship by another five minutes. Still the overloaded boat could not make it. Luckily a friend on board the ship, seeing his plight, hailed another boat that happened to be nearby, and hired it for him, paying ten rupees. This boat picked him up from the overloaded one and enabled him to reach the ship. A rope was thrown out to haul him up as the ship's ladder had already been withdrawn. Hardly had he landed on the deck when the ship started. The other passengers were left behind.

Mombasa was the next port they touched and then Zanzibar. At Zanzibar the captain took him with another Englishman for an "outing". Little did the young man know what he was in for. He soon learnt what a sailor's "outing" meant.

We were taken to some Negro women's quarter by a tout. We were each shown into a room. I simply stood there dumb with shame. Heaven only knows what the poor woman must have thought of me. When the captain called me I came out just as I had gone in. He saw my innocence. . . . I thanked God that the sight of the woman had not moved me in the least. I

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was disgusted at my weakness . . . for not having had the courage to refuse to go into the room.[1]

The incident, he says, " increased my faith in God and taught me, to a certain extent, to cast off false shame."

From Zanzibar the passengers were to be trans-shipped to another boat. During the eight or ten days that the ship remained in port Mohandas took the opportunity to have a good look at the town and its environment. Among the places he visited was a law court. A law suit was in progress. A Parsi lawyer was examining a witness, asking him questions on debit and credit entries in an account book. Mohandas felt absolutely at sea. He knew nothing about book-keeping. And he had accepted an engagement in a case that turned entirely on accounts!

Zanzibar provided him his first glimpse of Africa, the ancient, the primeval, the untamed, the land of menace and mystery that, "was the first continent and beheld the first man and may live to see the only man" — if, as S. G. Millin observes, Arnold Toynbee's prognostication comes true, and "the Atom Bomb and all that end in man's beginning again with the Negrito."[2] Everything here was gigantic — the stature of its inhabitants, the girth, the height and the spread of its trees, the luxuriance of its vegetation, and the size of the fruits. He felt overwhelmed.

After calling at Mozambique the steamer reached Durban, the city named after Sir Benjamin D'Urban, the Governor of the Cape—also known as Port Natal, from the fact that it was on Christmas Day of 1497 that Vasco de Gama first discovered Natal, of which it is the principal port.

Totalling 472,685 square miles, the South Africa, to which Gandhiji went in the eighteen-nineties, comprised four geographical and political divisions, much the same as it does today, viz. Cape Colony, Natal, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. Of its 3.3 millions hardly .7 million were whites, the rest were "natives" and Coloureds with a sprinkling of "Asiatics".

It is a land of distances and contrasts. Between Durban and Cape Town, lie 1800 miles. The scenery varies from the hard, semi-arid wilderness of the Karroo, with its vast sheep runs stretching away from the coastal belt, to the rolling grass plains and bush-veld of the Transvaal, and from this to the smiling Garden Colony of the Cape, famed for its fruits—banana and pine apple, grape, peach and plum, citrus, granadilla and avacado pear—unrivalled alike in their excellence and their abundance.

The climate is moderate and even. Nature is bountiful. Maize, the staple food of the indigenous Africans, millets and sugar cane are the principal crops. The soil teems with minerals. Besides coal, iron and manganese, South Africa boasts the fabulous gold and

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diamond fields. The diamond fields of Kimberley are reputed to be the largest accumulation of diamonds in the world. The gold mines of South Africa produce annually nearly half the world's gold; the yield for 1961 was 22,900 fine ounces worth 800 million dollars. Since the first major discovery of gold in 1884, the South African mines are estimated to have earned more than 19 billion dollars.

South Africa has today come to be known above all as the land of *apartheid*, literally "aparthood", or "separateness"—an expression coined to denote the policy of racial segregation based on a *herrenvolk* feeling—that has become to the South African whites an " immutable category, a morality, a religion, a philosophy, and a politics all in one"; and given to the world in the problem of racial conflict and the clash of colour one of its worst headaches. At the time it broke away from the British Commonwealth in May 1961, the 2.64 million South African whites had 156 members in the Parliament against 7 members (all whites) representing the ten million non-whites. In the Senate the corresponding figures were 85 and 4 respectively. Indians were entirely unrepresented. Also unrepresented were the Coloured women, and all the Coloured people, both men and women, of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State.

The South African Nationalist justifies this in the name of *bassekop*, in plain language, "bosshood" or white supremacy. But Africa is now awake. The long pent up bitterness in the African breast has found expression in this utterance of Hastings Kamutuzu Banda who was appointed Premier of Nayasaland in 1963:

> You whites think of yourselves as riders on a black horse. But you whites are finished—here in Africa and everywhere else in the world. It's your own fault. You're being paid back now for crimes committed centuries ago. There's no more hope for you. Make your exits! Get out![3]

Apartheid, and the thinking that inspires it, has made South Africa "a byword for all that is hopeless and intractable"; also by the same token, "world's most fertile field of human research", where "all the most difficult relationships could be found in our modern age".

All this was hidden, when Gandhiji was on his way there, in the womb of time. The Union of South Africa had not been born. The Cape Province was a self-governing colony under the British flag, Natal was a Crown Colony and the Transvaal and the Orange Free State were independent Boer Republics. Cecil Rhodes was the Premier of the Cape, and Paul Kruger the President of the Republic of the Transvaal. The stage was being set for a showdown between the two. Events were yet shaping that later made South Africa the laboratory for experiments that led to the discovery of Satyagraha as the solvent beyond compare of all differences whether between individuals, groups or nations.

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2

There are few more charming scenes than the enchanting panorama presented by the broad semi-circular sweep of Durban harbour, covering an area of nearly six square miles, with undulating, forested hills rising tier upon tier in the background, broad boulevards running along the seaside, and shining bathing beaches. As soon as the steamer entered the quay, Dada Abdulla's men and others came on board to meet the Indian passengers. A single glance at the way the port officials treated them was enough to bring home to the newcomer the place the coloured man held in Natal.

A merchant prince from Porbandar, Dada Abdulla Sheth had by his native intelligence and business acumen made himself immensely rich. He had purchased ships from Glasgow, ran his own passenger line between India and South Africa, and carried on an extensive business both in Natal and the Transvaal. During the gold rush of 1888-90 in South Africa, when the import of gold into India was unrestricted and a pound was valued at thirteen rupees, he had like many Indian merchants in South Africa amassed a vast fortune. His extensive estate can be seen sprawling by the seaside on the outskirts of his home town of Porbandar even today. Though virtually unlettered he had picked up English sufficient for his business needs, and was highly esteemed by the Indian community. But at their very first meeting, Gandhiji could not help noticing an atmosphere of sycophancy and "a sort of snobbishness of manner" about those around him, to which he seemed to have become quite accustomed. It jarred upon him.

Dada Abdulla, on his part, eyeing suspiciously the style of dress, and living of the dapper young man, whom his brother had sent from India, wondered within himself if he might not turn out to be a "white elephant". The first impression on either side was thus anything but favourable. In the words of Gandhiji, "He did not understand me. I could not understand him."[4]

On the second or third day of his arrival, Dada Abdulla took his new attorney to the Durban Court. He was wearing a frock-coat and a turban, "an imitation of the Bengal *puggari*".

The Magistrate, espying a queerly dressed stranger in the court, stared at him for some time, and then ordered him to remove his headdress.

He refused to do so and walked out of the court.

He soon learnt the cause of it. Indians had been first brought to South Africa as indentured labourers, to provide cheap farm labour to the whites. They came generally under a "five year" agreement and were known as *girmitiyas* from *girmit*—the corrupt form of the English word "agreement".

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In their wake came Indian traders, mostly from the West coast of India and engaged in small business. As their business expanded, they imported Parsis and other educated Indians from India as clerks and employees in their firms. In course of time they were joined by freed indentured labourers, some of whom had on the termination of their indenture settled on land and engaged in fruit and vegetable growing. Others had settled as hawkers and pedlars. Then there were the children of *girmitiyas*, born in indenture, and the children of freed Indians. A number of them had embraced Christianity and were employed as waiters, etc. in hotels. They had adopted English dress.

The whites made no distinction between the indentured labourers and the freed labourers and between the labourers and other Indians. To them they were all "coolies", and they treated them as such. Some time they were called *Samis* —a corruption of *Swami*, the usual termination of South Indian names, the bulk of the indentured labourers being from South India. *Sami* was used by the White man as a term of contempt.

There were thus three categories of Indians. Businessmen, mostly Muslims, their Parsi clerks, and Hindus. To escape the insult of being classified as "coolies", the Muslims called themselves "Arabs" and even adopted the flowing Arab dress; the Parsis passed off as Persians, and came to be distinguished by their Parsi dress. But the Hindus, who retained their customary dress, became "coolies"—irrespective of their vocation, or status in society. Thus there were in South Africa "coolie merchants", "coolie doctors", "coolie clerks", "coolie barristers" and so on.

For a while Mohandas was tempted to cut the Gordian knot by discarding his Indian dress and adopting English dress instead. But Dada Abdulla strongly disapproved of it. "It will only make you look like waiter," he said. Besides, it would be tantamount to desertion of his countrymen who had stuck to their Indian dress, he urged. It would compromise their position. Gandhiji felt the force of Dada Abdulla's argument, and stuck to his Indian dress. The incident made headlines in the Press. "Some supported me while others severely criticised me for my temerity". He was dubbed an "unwelcome visitor". He replied defending the wearing of his turban in the court. The incident thus gave him an "unexpected advertisement" in South Africa within a few days of his arrival.

Among Indian Christians in Durban, whom he met in the next few days, were Mr. Paul, the Roman Catholic Court interpreter, and Subhan Godfrey—a teacher under a Protestant Mission. He likewise made the acquaintance of Parsi Rustomji and Adamji Miyakhan. Both became his political colleagues, and their sons afterwards. Subhan Godfrey's son James Godfrey and Jal Rustomji, Parsi Rustomji's son, later came to India on various South African deputations more than once, and died a couple of years ago worthily holding high their parents' standards.

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After he had been in Durban for seven or eight days, Dada Abdulla's firm received a letter from Pretoria from their lawyer asking them to send either Dada Abdulla or a representative to explain the case.

"Will you go?" Dada Abdulla asked Gandhiji.

"That I can only say after I have studied the case," he answered.

Dada Abdulla asked his clerk to explain the case to him. "The clerk went on talking about this debited and that credited, and I felt more and more confused."[5] He did not even know what a P. Note meant. He consulted the dictionary. The word was not there. Taking his courage in both hands he asked the clerk and learnt that a P. Note meant a promissory note.

His native intellectual vigour and the habit he had formed of never shirking mental exertion now came to him in good stead. He bought a book on book-keeping and soon learnt all he needed to know about accounts.

When he had thoroughly understood the case, he told Dada Abdulla that he was ready to go. Dada Abdulla instructed his lawyer in Pretoria to arrange for his lodging.

Suspicious by nature, Dada Abdulla said to Gandhiji, "I shall also write to my Memon friends there. But I would not advise you to stay with them." He was afraid they might intercept and read his private correspondence, or otherwise try to influence him. "The more you avoid familiarity with them, the better for us," he warned.

"But I do intend to cultivate the acquaintance of the other party," Gandhiji answered. "I would try, if possible, to settle the case out of court. After all Tyeb Sheth is a relative of yours."

At the mention of a probable settlement out of court Dada Abdulla pricked up his ears. "Take care," he cautioned, "Tyebji Sheth is not a man to consent to a settlement easily. With the slightest unwariness on your part, he will screw all sorts of thing out of you. . . . So, please think twice before you do anything."

Gandhiji assured him he would be discreet; nobody should be able to get a word out of him. He would not talk about the case with Tyebji Sheth or anybody else, but only suggest to them a settlement out of court to avoid litigation.

Dada Abdulla was satisfied. A week's close contact had enabled him to have a better appreciation of his young attorney. He could trust him; he was no longer a "white elephant". On the seventh or eighth day after his arrival in Durban Gandhiji started for Pretoria.

3

Before the railway was rushed through to the Rand in 1895, Charlestown was the terminus of the railway communication from Natal. There was no railway between Charlestown and Johannesburg

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but only a stage coach. A first class seat had been booked for Gandhiji for the railway-cum-coach journey. Dada Abdulla pressed him to book a bedding also, but he refused, as he had rugs of his own, and felt it would be sheer waste to spend five shillings extra on a bedding ticket. Maritzburg was 73 miles railway journey from Durban. When the train reached there it was nine at night. A European passenger came in. Finding a "dark skinned man" in the carriage, he frowned, went out and returned with one or two railway officials. They said nothing. A third one then came and rudely ordered the "coolie barrister" to remove himself to the van compartment.

"But I hold a first class ticket," the "coolie barrister" protested. He would not voluntarily go out, he said.

The railway official called a police constable. The constable took the protesting Indian by the hand, and pushed him out of the compartment. His luggage was pitched out after him. He refused to go into another compartment. The train started. He was stranded on the platform. Leaving the other luggage where it was, he went and sat in the waiting room, keeping only his handbag with him.

Situated in a leafy hollow at an elevation of 2,218 feet from the sea level, Pietermaritzburg is commanded on all sides by hills. South Africa being south of the Equator, the seasons there are the reverse of what they are in India. When it is winter here, it is summer there, and *vice versa*. It was the month of June, and therefore the depth of winter. The night was bitterly cold. A chill blast blew from the surrounding hills. "My overcoat was in my luggage, but I did not dare to ask for it lest I should be insulted again. . . . There was no light in the room. A passenger came in at about midnight and possibly wanted to talk to me. But I was in no mood to talk."[6]

Numbed in body and mind he sat and shivered the whole night, debating within himself whether he should break his engagement with his clients and return to India, or whether he should proceed to Pretoria, not minding the insults, fight for his rights and return to India only after finishing the case. By the time the grey of the morning had begun to spread over the surrounding hills his mind was made up. He would stay on and fight and face all hardships that might come in his way—fight not for the redress of personal wrongs, but against the deep seated malady of which his own experience was but a superficial symptom. He was face to face with the canker of racialism and colour prejudice.

And a momentous decision it proved to be. Years afterwards, being asked once by Dr. John Mott, the American missionary, what had been the "most creative experience" of his life, he recalled his inner struggle on that winter night while he sat and shivered in the dark waiting room, as the one experience that had changed the course of his life. "My active non-violence began from that date,"[7] he said.

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The Almighty Searcher of all hearts was to put his resolve to the test during that very journey. In the morning he sent two long telegrams—one to the General Manager of the Railway Company, the other to Dada Abdulla. The latter saw the General Manager of the Railway and also wired to the Indian merchants at Pietermaritzburg and other places to meet Gandhiji and look after him. In the course of the day they came. He told them of what he had experienced. They said that was nothing unusual, and narrated to him their own bitter experience. It was a dismal tale. What made it more dismal still was that they seemed to be reconciled to their lot. They were a business community, they said. They had come out to make money. They could not afford to be squeamish about self-respect. They had to pocket the insults. By the time the evening train arrived he felt sick at heart. There was a first-class berth reserved for him. He now purchased the bedding ticket which he had refused to do at Durban. The next morning the train reached Charlestown.

The ticket he had purchased at Durban covered the journey by the stage-coach also. But when Gandhiji showed it to the agent of the coach company at Charlestown, he said it was " cancelled". Gandhiji knew this was not so, the break in the journey did not invalidate his ticket. This in the end the agent had to admit. But he was afraid of seating a "man with a dark skin" in the coach. Other passengers were sure to object and might refuse to sit alongside of a "coolie".

A white man, called the "leader", was in charge of the coach. Usually he had his seat by the side of the coachman on the box. On this occasion he decided to sit inside and gave his seat to the "coolie-barrister". But at three o'clock, when the coach reached Pardekoph, desirous of smoking he came out and insisted on occupying the seat, next to the driver.

"Now, Sami, you sit on this," he said to the frock-coated "coolie-barrister", as he took a dirty piece of sack-cloth from the coachman and spread it on the footboard.

"You would have me sit at your feet, I will not do so, but I am prepared to sit inside," Gandhiji replied.

Infuriated the white man began to box his ears heavily. Seizing him by the arm he tried to drag him down. "I clung to the brass rails of the coachbox . . . determined to keep my hold even at the risk of breaking my wristbones ".[8]

The unequal struggle between the frail, innocent stranger and the big, burly bully of the white man scandalised some of the passengers, who were witnessing the scene. They intervened: "Man, let him alone. . . . He is right. If he can't stay there let him come and sit with us."

"No fear," boomed the bully. But at the same time he let go his hold, ordered the Hottentot servant, who was sitting on the other side of the coachbox, to sit on the footboard and shamefacedly took the seat

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so vacated, though he kept on swearing and threatening dire things that he would do when they reached Standerton in the Transvaal territory.

The passengers took their seats, the coachman whistled and the coach started. " My heart was beating fast within my breast, and I was wondering whether I should ever reach my destination alive."[9] The bully on the box kept shaking his finger at him and holding out threats all the way, while he sat speechless and prayed to God for help.

Standerton is situated on the Vaal river, that marks the boundary between the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. It was reached after dark. Dada Abdulla had wired Indian friends here also. They received Gandhiji and took him to Sheth Isa Haji Sumar's shop. Again, it was his lot to hear distressing tales of their humiliating experience that the Sheth and his clerks poured into his ears. They thought it would comfort him. It only added to his misery.

Next day he wrote a letter to the agent of the Coach Company, drawing his attention to the threat that his man had held out. The agent wrote back assuring him that he would be accommodated inside the coach with the other passengers on the onward journey and that the man who had ill-treated him would not be there.

Night had fallen, when he reached Johannesburg. Finding nobody at the station to meet him, he hailed a cab and asked to be driven to the National Hotel.

"Sorry, we are full up here," the hotel manager drily told him when he asked for a room, and bade him goodbye.

He asked the cabman to take him to Kamruddin's, whose address Dada Abdulla had given him. Abdul Gani Sheth was there waiting for him.

"And you expected to be accommodated in the Grand National Hotel?" he exclaimed with a laugh, when the new arrival narrated to him his experience at the hotel.

"Why not?"

"You will know by and by."

Other friends joined in the conversation. He was in Kruger's Transvaal, they told him. He would have to travel by third class next day, when he resumed his journey to Pretoria, "First and Second class tickets are never issued to Indians."

"You cannot have made persistent efforts to get them," he remarked.

They said they had made representations but admitted that they themselves were not very keen on travelling first class.

He could not understand. He asked for a first class ticket to be procured for him, adding that if he could not travel by first class on the railway he would prefer travelling by coach. After all Pretoria was only a little over thirty-seven miles from Johannesburg. He wrote a letter to the Station Master asking for a first class ticket for Pretoria, specially

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mentioning that he was a barrister, that he *always* travelled first and that he needed to reach Pretoria as early as possible. As there was not enough time for reply, he concluded, he would receive the reply in person at the station.

If the Station Master saw before him a cultured, young barrister in faultless English dress, he calculated, it would make him revise his notions about a "coolie barrister" and he would not dare say "No", which otherwise might easily be his reply to a "coolie" barrister's request for first class accommodation.

Luckily, the Station Master was not a Boer but Dutch, and as such was not so colour-conscious. He said he would give him a first class ticket provided he agreed not to involve him, i.e. not to sue the Railway Company if the guard should ask him to shift to a third class compartment. In a friendly manner he added, as he handed him the ticket, "I wish you a safe journey. I can see you are a gentleman."

But Sheth Abdul Gani knew better. "I am afraid the guard will not leave you in peace," he remarked to Gandhiji as the train started.

The Sheth's fears proved true. At Germiston a railway guard came to examine tickets and ordered the "coolie barrister" to remove himself to the third class compartment.

Gandhiji showed him his first class ticket.

"That does not matter—out you go," the guard gruffly told him.

There was only one other passenger in the compartment—an Englishman. He remonstrated with the guard: "Why are you troubling the gentleman? Don't you see he has a first class ticket? I do not in the least mind travelling with him."

"If you wish to travel with a coolie, what do I care," the guard growled and went out.

It was eight o'clock when the train reached Pretoria. The station was deserted. The gas lights were dimly burning. He waited till all the other passengers had cleared out and then in fear and trembling asked the ticket collector, as he handed him his ticket, if he could direct him to some hotel.

The ticket collector could not, but an American Negro who was listening to the conversation offered to take him to a small hotel of which the proprietor was an American and was very well known to him. "I am sure he would accept you," he said to the stranger.

The Negro friend took him to the Johnston's Family Hotel. The proprietor agreed to accommodate him provided he was prepared to have his meals served to him in his room. He had no colour prejudice himself, he said, but he was afraid that his European customers might object to have him dine at the table, and he could not afford to lose their custom.

Gandhiji accepted the offer and was shown into his room.

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After a little while Mr. Johnston came back to him and with profuse apologies explained that his fears had proved false. He had spoken to other guests and none of them had any objection to his having his dinner in the dining room. "Please, therefore, come to the dining room," he said, "and stay here as long as you please."

He went to the dining room and had a hearty dinner.

4

Lawyer, carpenter and missionary, A. W. Baker, Gandhiji's attorney, was a devout Christian, completely free from race prejudice but somewhat of a "hot-gospeller", convinced that there was no salvation outside the Christian fold. He was one of the Directors of the South African General Mission, and had at his own expense built a church, where he used to preach regularly. To train lady workers for mission work he had himself gone in for a systematic study of the Zulu languages.

"There is a fearful amount of colour prejudice here," Baker told him when Gandhiji saw him next day and discussed with him the question of his accommodation. He took him to a baker's wife, whom he knew. She agreed to have him as a boarder for 35 shillings a week.

Baker and his group of co-workers met every day at 1 o'clock "to pray for light and peace". When he learnt from Gandhiji in their very first meeting that he did not know where he stood religiously, and what his belief should be, he invited him to join them at prayer the next day.

Paying his hotel bills at the Johnston's Gandhiji shifted to his lodging. After partaking of the vegetarian luncheon that his landlady had prepared for him, he went to see the friends to whom Dada Abdulla had given him a note. By the time he returned to his lodging it was dark. That night, as he lay in bed sorting out the impressions of his first day in Pretoria, his mind was in a turmoil. On the one hand he, an utter stranger, found himself surrounded by a fearful race-prejudice in that distant land. On the other, there were these good Christians full of concern for his soul, offering him a haven of protection. Was their concern altogether altruistic? Would it be right on his part to avail himself of their kindness and encourage hopes which might not be fulfilled? Would it not introduce a subtle taint in his search for truth, prejudicing it from the very start? The thought of it tormented him. But slowly, as the turmoil subsided, he came to the clear decision that he should make a dispassionate study of all that came to him and deal with Mr. Baker's group "as God guided me. I should not think of embracing another religion before I had fully understood my own."

Relieved in mind he fell to sleep.

In their prayer meeting next day, Baker and his group, all knelt down to pray. He knelt down with them. Their usual form of prayer consisted of asking for "the doors of their heart to be opened and for the

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day to be passed peacefully". That day a special prayer was offered in addition by the group to give to "the new brother who has come amongst us . . . the peace that Thou hast given to us. May the Lord Jesus who has saved us save him too."[10] The prayer did not last more than a few minutes. After the prayer they all dispersed, each going to his lunch or to his business.

Two elderly spinsters, Miss Harris and Miss Gabb, and Michael Coates, the Quaker, were among them. The two ladies gave Gandhiji a standing invitation to 4 o'clock tea every Sunday at their residence, where they lived together. Coates introduced him to his other friends —all Christians—and loaded him with books of his choice on religion to read.

Baker had told him at the very beginning that they had not much work for him as a barrister as they had engaged the best counsel. His assistance would be chiefly required for obtaining necessary information and as a liaison with their client. With plenty of time on hand, he read voraciously. In all, during his stay in Pretoria, in the year 1893, he read about eighty books on religion. Every Sunday when he met Coates he gave him his "religious diary" for the week and discussed with him the books he had read and the impression they had left on him. "The ladies used to narrate their sweet experience and talk about the peace they had found."

Of the books that he read, he found Butler's *Analogy* to be "a very profound and difficult book". The commentary by Dr. Parker was "morally stimulating". But the "Many Infallible Proofs" left him cold. He needed no "proofs" as regards the existence of God, and no "infallible" proofs could convince him that Jesus was "the only Incarnation of God and the Mediator between God and man."[11]

To Coates as to Baker, Christianity was the truth—the only true religion. Noticing one day round his young heathen friend's neck the necklace of *Tulasi* beads that he was wearing as the mark of his Vaishnava faith, Coates asked him, "Do you believe in it?"

"I do not know of its mysterious significance. I do not think I should come to harm if I did not wear it. But I cannot give it up without sufficient reason," he answered.

"Then it is superstition. It does not become you. Come, let me break the necklace."

"No, you will not. It is a sacred gift from my mother. She put it round my neck as a token of her affection. When in course of time it breaks of itself I shall not renew it. But this necklace cannot be broken".

And so the necklace remained. Coates was disappointed.

A Plymouth Brother, to whom Coates introduced him, tried to win him to the Christian faith by expatiating on the beauty of the Christian doctrine of redemption and vicarious atonement by Jesus Christ.

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"Look here," he would say to Gandhiji, "I do whatever I like and yet I am unburdened by any sense of sin." And, as if to prove it, he "knowingly committed transgressions".[12]

Gandhiji answered in effect: "I do not seek redemption from the consequences of my sins. I seek to be redeemed from sin itself, or rather from the very thought of sin."

The Plymouth Brother tried to convince him that his effort was futile. Sin everybody must. It was impossible to live in the world sinless. That was why Jesus had suffered and atoned for the sins of all mankind. "It is for mankind to avail itself of His great sacrifice by believing in Him and His promise of everlasting life."

"If this be the Christianity that all Christians accept," Gandhiji finally answered, "I cannot accept it."

Coates was shocked when Gandhiji narrated to him his experience with the Plymouth Brother. He himself was a God-fearing man. Gandhiji re-assured him by saying that he would not let his experience prejudice his mind against Christianity, but would continue his search for truth with an open mind. He knew that all Christians did not interpret the Christian doctrine that way. His difficulty lay in regard to the interpretation of the Bible itself.

5

The iron had entered deep into Gandhiji's soul. Having pledged himself to the eradication of the racial stigma under which his compatriots lay, he did not allow the grass to grow under his feet. Side by side with the Christian contacts he began to establish contact with the Indian community. Sheth Tyeb Haji Khan, the defendant in Dada Abdulla's suit, held a unique position in the public life of the Transvaal comparable to Dada Abdulla Sheth's in Natal. With his help, within a week of his arrival in Pretoria, he called a meeting of all the Indian residents of Pretoria to awaken them to a sense of the disabilities they were suffering under. They met at the house of Sheth Haji Muhammad Haji Joosab. The gathering consisted mostly of Memons with a sprinkling of Hindus.

Making truthfulness in business the theme of what was his first public speech, he refuted the commonly held notion that truth was inconsistent with business, that practical affairs were one thing and religion quite another and "never the twain shall meet". They were only a handful in a foreign land, he told them. That made their responsibility to be truthful all the greater, because "the conduct of a few Indians was the measure of the millions of their countrymen." He spoke to them about the lack of sanitary habits among them and the necessity of cultivating individual and corporate cleanliness so that nobody should point his finger at them. Finally they must, he urged, forget all communal,

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religious and provincial distinctions and regard themselves as Indians first and Indians last, if they wished to survive as a community in the midst of the atmosphere of hostility that surrounded them.

There was hardly anything in this that the audience had not at one time or another heard before. But never had anyone spoken to them with such sincerity and fervour of conviction that comes from long, sustained, unswerving practice of what one holds to be one's truth. The five things that he had placed before them were in themselves commonplace, but they entered into their daily practice, applied to everyone of them, and had a bearing on the disabilities and humiliations that they were smarting under. His speech made a deep impression. A discussion followed. In the course of it, he suggested that an Association should be formed to bring their hardships and disabilities to the attention of the authorities.

The proposal was enthusiastically received. Several people offered to supply facts. Noting how few Indians in the audience knew English, although they were living in an English-speaking country, he offered to teach a class, if one was started or personally to instruct individuals, who might be desirous of learning the language. The class was not started but three young men came forward and said that they were ready to learn English if he would go to their places to teach them at their convenience. Of these two were Muslims—one a barber, the other a clerk—the third was a Hindu petty shopkeeper. He agreed to suit them. "I had no misgivings regarding my capacity to teach them. They might be tired, but not I. Sometimes, it would happen that I would go to their places only to find them engaged in business. But I did not lose patience." As a result of his labours, in about eight months' time, two learnt "enough English to keep accounts and write ordinary business letters"; the barber acquired "just enough English for dealing with his customers." Two of the pupils were thus "equipped for making a fair income".

He was "quite satisfied", he says. Like the good steward in the parable, he was content to put to full use whatever talent God had vouchsafed to him. More is not given a man to do.

Encouraged by the success of their first meeting, they decided to meet once a week, or at least once a month. The meetings were held more or less regularly. At these meetings all matters of practical importance to individuals or to the community were freely discussed. He worked indefatigably. Before long there was not an Indian in Pretoria, whom he did not know, or with whose conditions he was not acquainted.

He took up with the railway authorities the restrictions on the Indians in regard to first class travel. These, it was found on a closer examination, were not warranted even under the existing regulations. As a result an assurance was given that first and second class tickets would in future be issued to Indians "who were properly dressed". This

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was a partial victory. The principle was conceded but in practice much was left to the discretion of the railway authorities, who were to be the sole judge as to who was "properly dressed". Gandhiji also got into touch with Jacobus de Wet, the British Agent in Pretoria, who agreed to help the Indians as best as he could. From some papers which the Agent showed him, he learnt how Indians had been thrown out of the Orange Free State, bag and baggage.

Slowly the leaven began to work. Though separated by a distance of over five hundred miles the Indian community in both Pretoria and Durban was for all practical purposes one. A number of the leading Indian merchants had branches and business connections in both the Transvaal and Natal. The intercourse between them was continuous and brisk, and any little incident occurring in either province sent out ripples that spread to both.

Indicative of the new temper that had begun to rise in the Indian community since Gandhiji's arrival in Pretoria was a little incident that occurred in the last week of November, 1893. A Muslim leader Tyab Mohamed, a resident of Durban, was thrice ejected with insults and threats from one second class carriage to another during a train journey from Peitermaritzburg to Durban. Instead of following the philosophy of "pocketing the insults", in order to "earn a living", as the Indian merchant community had hitherto done, he brought a claim of £ 100 as damages against the Natal Government Railway (N.G.R.) for unlawful ejectment from a second class carriage.

Questioned in the course of the trial whether white passengers and railway officials had not at different places threatened to "knock hell out" of "the stinking coolie" unless he removed himself to another carriage, as stated by the plaintiff, the defendants prevaricated and denied having resorted to either threats or abuse. This drew from the trying magistrate some severe strictures:

> William Massey, Jun., a lad of about 14, deposed that he heard one of the officials (Hendry) say "Come out" to the Arab but plaintiff was not called ". . . Coolie" nor was plaintiff molested. Witness's father said, "Let him alone", but witness did not know why.
>
> The Magistrate (Mr. Dillon): Did you tell Hendry that your father said "Let him alone".
>
> Witness: "I can't explain why my father said this."
>
> Mr. Dillon: "I thought so".
>
> Further cross-examined by Farman, the counsel for the plaintiff: Mr. Massey did not say, "Let him alone", but said "It is all right".
>
> The Magistrate: "Then why did you not let the Arab remain".
>
> Witness: "I had to carry out my instructions".
>
> The Magistrate: "Your instructions state that Indians and natives are to be treated with consideration."

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Witness: "Yes".

Mr. Dillon: Then you have a very different opinion to what I have, and it is a curious thing that people who are not connected with the railway observe more than you.

Witness: I 've never seen these people badly treated.[13]

The Case was decided against the N. G. R. The *Natal Mercury* commented:

> The verdict . . . may not be a popular one—but we cannot but admit— . . . that it is a fair verdict. . . . Our merchants do business with the Arabs and mingle with them at public sales, and there ought not to be any reasonable objection to travel with them provided they conform to the regulations. Very many of the lower classes who travel on the Home Railways are infinitely more objectionable from the mere point of cleanliness than the better class Indian merchants of Natal.[14]

Such were the small beginnings of what later developed into the great Satyagraha struggle in South Africa. Gandhiji had no idea at that time that the close study that he was making of the Indian question would be of any use to him in future or lead to anything further. For he was looking forward to returning to India at the end of the year, after finishing his case. He did what his immediate duty demanded of him in the environment in which he was placed. He did not care to see the "distant scene". In the philosophy of life that he was evolving, success and failure had no meaning; there was no big, no small. It was all a part of his spiritual striving. Unawares he was preparing himself for his life's work.

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CHAPTER XIV

GROPING

1

South Africa was exceedingly unhealthy for a man with a dark skin at this time. Under Law 3 of 1885, as slightly amended in 1886, every Indian settling in the Transvaal Republic was required to register himself by paying a poll tax of £3. Indians could not own any immovable property except in locations, wards and streets, set apart for them, and in practice were debarred from purchasing freehold land even in these. They enjoyed no franchise right. The gold mining laws of Johannesburg prevented them from taking out mining licences and rendered it criminal for them to sell or possess "native" gold. They shared with the "natives" certain other disabilities.

Rationalisation of behaviour is a well-known human trait. In 1877, Anthony Trollope, the English novelist, after an official visit to South Africa and an exhaustive study of its problems on the spot, wrote: "South Africa is a country of black men . . . and not of white men. It has been so, it is so, and it will be so." Dreading that by sheer weight of numbers the blacks might smother him the white man philosophised. He had annexed the "native's" land. This was but right and proper in terms of the law of progress. Had not Darwin prophesied that "in some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries", the civilised races of the world were bound "almost certainly to exterminate and replace the savages throughout the world"? But what was to be done with the "natives" if despite Darwin they refused to be exterminated and in fact went on increasing? How was the white man's hegemony to be maintained over the black native population that already outnumbered the whites by five to one?

Darwin provided an answer to this also: The black man, he had "scientifically" shown, was nearer the gorilla than the white man; and thus the white man's inferior. And Darwin could not be wrong. The "natives" were "undeveloped human beings", Rhodes had declared. They had "human minds, but they were just emerging from the state of barbarism". In terms of civilisation they were children. Physically, however, they were adults, constituting nature's reservoir of cheap labour for the European, as the lord of creation, to fulfil his own destiny.

Unfortunately, the "native" only lived for the day. Only when driven by hunger would he engage in "Kaffir work", to which no white

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man would stoop. As soon as he had earned the wherewithal to buy a few cattle, he would return to his kraal and not again turn up till hunger drove him once more to seek a job. He would be contented with little rather than labour to have much. The "natives" laboured only, the European complained, "in order to idle".

This to the white man was "loafing". The "natives" had to be cured of this vice, and taught the dignity of labour through iron discipline. Above all they had to be broken into the habit of unquestioning obedience, and filled with wholesome fear of and respect for the white man. Thus alone could they be fitted into the scheme of civilisation, and help execute nature's design by providing to the Europeans the answer to their labour problem.

A series of laws were accordingly passed by the Transvaal Raad to define the political, social and economic relationship between the two races—the black and the white. In the constitution of the Republic framed in 1858 Article 9 enacted that "no equality between white and black shall be recognised in Church or State". To induce the "natives" to work there was a special tax of 10 shillings annually on "loafing". A law passed in 1844 laid down the policy that "no native shall be allowed to establish their residence near towns to the detriment of the inhabitants, except with the consent of the Raad". This was intended to control their comings and goings.

To maintain the superiority of the Caucasian races a bye-law was enacted prohibiting the coloured people from making use of the sidewalks. Contravention of it was made punishable with flogging. Imprisonment with or without hard labour, it was argued, had little deterrent effect on the African. He was quite used to hard labour. Prison punishment was no worse than any other servitude. Nor would he in regard to housing or eating be any the worse in prison. How then was he to be cured of his delinquency? The lash was the answer. It was the only thing that could produce an impression on him.

Some "natives" were flogged in February 1894, for contravening the footpath bye-law in Johannesburg. The *Press*, a pro-Kruger mining magnate's organ, owned by Sir Joseph Benjamin Robinson, the ruthless multimillionaire Colossus of the Rand, nicknamed "the buccaneer" thereupon castigated the English section in Johannesburg, which had adversely commented on the sentence, as follows:

> The people of Exeter Hall, and indeed most English men and women who reside in England . . . cannot understand how vitally essential it is to keep the Kaffir in his right place. If natives are encouraged to believe that they are the equal of the Europeans, existence in the Transvaal would become intolerable to the whites. It is essential to the continued supremacy of the Europeans in South Africa that they should retain that instinctive pride of race which has always kept the Caucasian master of the Ethio-

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pian. The colonists in South Africa and the white residents of the Transvaal, living as many of them do among half subdued races, feel the necessity of rejecting the 'man and a brother' theory in regard to the Kaffir. And they do unanimously reject it with heart-felt sincerity, the only exceptions being those who have only recently come from England.

Had the English in India been as determined to assert their superiority as the Boers have always been in South Africa, it is a question whether the awful Indian mutiny would have ever occurred. Coloured races do not understand the policy of liberty, equality, fraternity. They understand that the conqueror must be master, that the strong must keep the weak in subjection, that the inferior race must bow to the superior. To ask for equality appears to them a sign of weakness, which they promptly take advantage of (Italics mine).

Justifying the sentence of flogging, the paper went on to observe: "These natives have lost their respect for the Caucasian and act as if they are the equal of the white man." They knew perfectly well that they must walk in the road and keep off the side walk. Those who continued to disregard the warning did so out of sheer "cheek". The whole future of the white races in Africa, the *Press* warned, depended upon "the rigid observance of the principle that *the black must be* kept in subjection". The Europeans of South Africa must, therefore, "*be for a century at least an aristocratic and semi-military caste* always watching a population more numerous than itself, with which it refuses to intermingle or live on the same plane" (Italics mine).

Intended for the African "natives" only, in practice these laws were extended to apply indiscriminately to all coloured persons, among them being Indians. White skin was the hallmark of civilisation. All races that did not possess it were, therefore, presumed to be "uncivilised natives".

For instance, natives were required to take out a travelling pass, costing a shilling and valid only for a single journey, when going from one place to another. Under it Haji Mahomed Haji Dada, a prominent businessman of Natal, was put out of his post chaise while travelling in the Transvaal, and made to walk, by a European policeman on horseback, at the point of the *sjambok*, three miles to get a pass. The pass master, who knew him well, however, told him that no pass was necessary in his case. He missed the coach in consequence and had to trudge by himself all the way from Volksrust to Charlestown. A graduate of the Madras University, Mr. Pillay, was thrown off the footpath in Pretoria.

The Pass Law in Natal and the Transvaal required every "native" found moving out of doors after 9 o'clock at night to be in possession of a pass from a white man, showing that he was under instructions, or otherwise to be able to give a good account of himself. Following the precedent of Natal, where the Pass Law applied only to the inden-

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tured Indians to prevent them from deserting, traders in the Transvaal who could be distinguished by their flowing Arab dress, were as a matter of favour let alone. But anything could happen, if a white guard, seized by overzeal, made up his mind to show to the despised "Asiatic" his proper place.

Gandhiji's Attorney and missionary friend, Michael Coates the Quaker, felt perturbed. Gandhiji often used to go out with him for a walk at night. He could issue a pass to his Negro servants. But he could not have given one to Gandhiji even if he had wished or Gandhiji had asked for it. Gandhiji of course never cared. In his view it would have been fraud. To protect his Indian protege from indignity Coates took him to his friend F. E. T. Krause, who had only recently returned from Europe where he had been studying law. He had started practice as an Advocate of the Old High Court of the South African Republic at Pretoria and had become Public Prosecutor. It turned out that he was at the Middle Temple, London, when Gandhiji was preparing for Barristership. He introduced Gandhiji to a brother of his, Dr. A. E. J. Krause, who was then the Attorney General of the Republic. Krause gave to Gandhiji a certificate of Exemption. Armed with this certificate he could be out of doors at all hours, without police interference. He carried it with him wherever he went. He had never to make use of it but this, as he says, was "a mere accident".

A. E. J. Krause and Gandhiji became friends and Gandhiji occasionally visited him. It was on one of these occasions that Gandhiji discovered how the "caste" feeling had spread from the European to the coloured man also. Krause having invited him one night to dinner, his brother F. E. T. Krause, afterwards related, found that the "native" servants objected to being called upon to wait on an Indian. It was only when it was explained to them that their guest was in his own country a very important person, in fact something like a "native chief", that they were persuaded to waive their objection. It was much later that Gandhiji realised the full extent of the coloured man's tragedy. Proud of the white blood in their veins the "Bastaards" looked down upon other tribes, who likewise were not the products of miscegenation.

Later during the Boer War F. E. T. Krause was court-martialled for "conspiring to murder" an Englishman, and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. He was also disbarred by the Benchers. Released at the end of the fighting, and honourably readmitted, he resumed practice, Gandhiji himself assisting him to put on his professional robes on the occasion as the symbol of his restoration.

The contact, thus formed with the two brothers by Gandhiji, later came in very handy in his public work.

2

On the outskirts of Pretoria, overlooked by an ungainly building

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across a rough dusty road—half church, half conventicle—there is a plain little bungalow with a tin roof and a veranda in front and at the back. Two small lions of the " heraldic type with ruesome countenances " guard the dark veranda steps. Close by at one time used to be a dump of dilapidated cans, pots and mouldering tins. The cracked stony ground was overgrown with weeds, and the blazing noonday sky struck out flashes among the rusting shards that added to the unkempt look and desolation of the landscape. Occasionally a puff of wind would drive the sand from the road against the corrugated roof and set it tinkling. It was on the *stoep* of this bungalow that Paul Kruger used to sit with his spittoon and pipe, welcoming with coffee and tobacco any Boer farmer, however poor, who came to see him and hold colloquies with his numerous friends and visitors. Only the presence of a police patrol distinguished it from other residences in the President Street, many of which were in fact far more attractive.

Every evening Gandhiji used to go out for his walk, along the footpath past the police patrol through the President Street to the plain beyond, unmolested. But one day when he was going as usual the man on duty without any notice or warning pushed him off the footpath and with a kick sent him staggering on to the street. He was taken aback. Before he could recover his speech Coates, who happened to be passing by on horseback, boomed out:

" Mr. Gandhi, I have seen everything. I shall gladly be your witness, if you proceed against this man. I am very sorry you have been so rudely assaulted."

"You need not be sorry," Gandhiji replied. " What does the poor man know? To him all coloured people are the same. He no doubt treats Negroes just as he has treated me." As for proceeding against the policeman who had assaulted him it was out of the question, he told Coates, as he had made it a rule not to bring to court a personal grievance.

"That is just like you. But think it over. We must teach such men a lesson," Coates persisted.

Gandhiji remained unmoved. Using Dutch, Coates severely reprimanded the policeman, a Boer, who shamefacedly apologised. "But there was no need," Gandhiji records, "I had already forgiven him."

But he did not wish to have a repetition of that experience. Since the man on duty used to be changed from day to day, there was only one sure way of avoiding the risk—not to expose himself to it. He never again went through that Street.

The experience strengthened his feeling, he says, that South Africa was "no place for a respectable Indian". He began to feel all the more for his countrymen and to think out ways of ameliorating their plight. But for the time being he had to curb his desire. The case that had brought

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him to South Africa was his immediate concern. Everything else must come after it.

* * *

The Dada Abdulla case provided Gandhiji an invaluable opportunity to gain legal experience that was of great help to him later in his public life. It arose out of business transactions. The claim was based partly on promissory notes and partly on specific performance of promise to deliver promissory notes. The defence was that the notes had been fraudulently obtained and lacked sufficient consideration. Preparing the case for the plaintiff's attorney, involved much patient industry, and close study of facts. More, it needed clear thinking and judgment. He threw himself heart and soul into it. It enabled him to measure his capacity and helped him to overcome diffidence. Above all it taught him the paramount importance of facts.

Frederick Pincutt, the well-known English jurist, whom he had consulted after his Bar Final examination on the eve of his departure from London, used to say, "Facts are three-fourths of the law". But Gandhiji had not yet realised the full significance of Pincutt's advice. In one of Gandhiji's cases in South Africa, justice was on his client's side but the law seemed to be against him. He consulted another noted South African advocate, Mr. J. W. Leonard. "If we take care of facts," Leonard told him, "law will take care of itself." With that he asked him to go deeper into the facts of the case in question. Gandhiji did so and the case began to present a different aspect altogether. Afterwards he even found a legal precedent bearing it out. The lesson was burnt in upon him that " facts mean truth and once we adhere to truth the law comes to our aid naturally ". Afterwards he was never known to brush aside or slur over a fact however inconvenient or prejudicial it might seem. Strict adherence to this principle enabled him later more than once in a crisis to find a way out of what to all intents looked like an impenetrable ring of steel.

From this and several similar experiences he learnt to regard law not as an intellectual legerdemain to make black appear white and white black, but as "codified ethics". The profession of law became to him the means to enthrone justice, not "entangle justice in the net of law". Throughout his legal career, he never took a case that he knew to be false or even seemed dubious.

He had never any doubt as to Dada Abdulla's success. The facts were on Dada's side. So also was the law bound to be on his side. But he clearly saw that if the case dragged on, no matter who won, both parties would ultimately be financially ruined. The lawyer's fees were steadily mounting up. Under the law, winning party could never fully recover the costs. He felt disgusted with his profession. Why could not the parties be brought together to settle the suit out of court by arbitration? After all Tyebji Sheth and Dada Abdulla both came from

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the same town and were kin. He succeeded in persuading the parties concerned to agree to arbitration.

The arbitrator gave a verdict in Dada Abdulla's favour. Now if Dada Abdulla had insisted on immediate execution of the arbitrator's award, Tyebji Sheth could have gone bankrupt, as he could not have paid all at once the entire amount, about £ 37,000, and costs. And this would have been a tragedy. For among the Indian merchants death was deemed preferable to the ignominy of bankruptcy. There was only one way. Dada Abdulla should be generous and agree to payment being made in easy instalments spread over a long period. To get him to do this proved even harder than getting him to agree to arbitration. But Gandhiji's persistence won the day, and both the parties were happy over the result. "My joy knew no bounds, and I learnt the true practice of law."

Through the practice of his profession Gandhiji came to know the better side of human nature and the art of entering men's hearts. It taught him the meaning and beauty of true compromise and became in his hands a potent means of reconciliation, which he put to its best use in the service of the community. He never used his legal knowledge to snatch a victory but to bring the parties together on the basis of equity and justice. In the end he was able to say with supreme satisfaction that during twenty years at the bar he had helped settle more cases out of court than he had actually fought out. "I lost nothing thereby not even money, certainly not my soul."

3

Baker was intent on winning his young Indian friend to the glory of Jesus Christ at any price. With his unbounded faith in the efficacy of prayer he had already introduced him to George Muller—the Bristol philanthropist, who depended on prayer "even for his mundane needs". With no fixed income, he had, according to one of his statements, lived for "sixty-four years and six months entirely by faith". During this period he was reputed to have solicited not "a single donation", but had received "in answer to prayer" a sum of £1,400,000[1]—an enormous amount for those days. Towards the close of 1893, he took his spiritual protege with a group of Christian friends to attend a Convention of Keswick school of Christians that was to be held at Wellington under the Presidency of that famous divine, the Rev. Andrew Murray, feeling that the atmosphere of religious exaltation in the Convention would surely lead him to embrace Christianity. The group set out in high hopes. Owing to the colour-bar, Baker ran into numerous difficulties in travelling with an Indian. As the group would not travel on the Sabbath Day, they had to break the journey on the way. The manager of the station hotel

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absolutely refused to accommodate the "coloured man". And all insistence on Baker's part on the "rights of the guests of hotel" availed him nothing. At Wellington the same story was repeated. Many years afterwards Baker recalled in his autobiography *Grace Triumphant:*

> I had great difficulty in getting leave for him to travel in the same compartment of the train with me to the Convention at Wellington, and could get no separate accommodation for him there. My host, who was a Dutch Salvationist, put a double-bedded room at our service, and I had the great distinction of sleeping in the same bed with the now so highly esteemed Indian Philosopher.

The Convention lasted for three days. Gandhiji found that everybody was praying for him. Their faith was obvious; their devotion unmistakable. "These people loved me so well," he afterwards narrated to the Rev. Joseph Doke, "that if it would have influenced me to become a Christian, they would have become vegetarian themselves." But what could he do? A religion, he felt, must not only appeal to the heart, it should satisfy the intellect also. His reason rebelled against the belief that Jesus Christ was the only incarnation, the "Only Begotten" son of God, and that without his mediation no salvation was possible. Nor could he accept the doctrine of vicarious atonement as propounded by his Christian friends. The death of Jesus Christ on the Cross was "a great example to the world, but that there was anything like a mysterious or miraculous virtue in it, my heart could not accept." Ethically, the Christian way of life did not seem to him to show any great advantage over other religions. Men belonging to other faiths showed as high a degree of moral and spiritual perfection as any pious Christian. In self-sacrifice and renunciation Hindus surpassed Christians. Finally, Christianity denied to creatures other than human beings the soul's existence. Their death must, therefore, mean their utter extinction. This he could not accept. The life of Jesus did not, it seemed to him, show "the all-embracing compassion for all living beings that, for instance, marked Buddha." Philosophically he found nothing extraordinary about the Christian doctrine. It did not provide a clear and satisfactory reply to the why and wherefore of existence, what are we, where do we come from, whither go we; and so he,

> "Came out by the same door as in . . . (he) went".

His Christian friends were shocked. But Baker did not despair. He kept up through the years a regular correspondence with him, even after Gandhiji's return to India. Every now and then he would inquire: "How is it with you?" To which Gandhiji invariably replied that so far as he knew, it was well with him. "May the Lord soon lead him out into the full light of the glory of God, which is radiant on the face of Christ,"[2] Baker wrote in his autobiography. The copy presented

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to Gandhiji bears the following autographed inscription, dated Ismand, PM Burg, Natal, 13-7-40:

"To my friend
M. K. Gandhi
in memory of old associations,
in Pretoria in 1893

A. W. Baker

'He that followeth *me* (said the Lord Jesus Christ) shall *not* walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.'

John 8-12
John 14-23/27"

4

Comparative leisure at Pretoria enabled Gandhiji to resume two little unfinished ventures on which he had launched while he was in India. One was a little handbook or *Guide to London* that he had set about to prepare in answer to numerous inquiries on his return from London. This was for use of persons who, following his example, might wish to go to England for study. The other was his unfinished experiment in Vital Food.

Covering 112 handwritten foolscap sheets the Guide is divided into four chapters, and has a preface and an appendix. It bears the evidence of having been written, at least in part, between the second half of 1893 and first half of 1894. For he says in it that he had only one morning suit in England when he went there in September 1888 which "is now five years old". He never published it. The existing copy was retrieved by me from a heap of papers littering the floor of a weaving shed in the Satyagrahashram at Sabarmati shortly after my arrival there in 1920. Being shown to Gandhiji, he said that it had been made at his instance by one of his clerks in South Africa, who wrote a very bad hand, to improve his hand-writing. Unfortunately some pages in the appendix are missing. The original could never be traced.

"In these days of cheap publication," the young writer begins with a flourish, when "authors are multiplying and have naturally lost a great deal of the respect they used to command before", he is not aspiring to authorship. "Issuing Guides does not make authors. They are made of 'sterner stuff'."

"Who should go to England?" he asks in the opening chapter and answers, "All who can afford it should go to England." They should go there, however, not to become barristers, but to study commerce, to learn to know the people there, their tastes and requirements and establish business contacts with them. Those who go for travel are advised to see their own country first. "When knowledge is thrust upon you

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without previous discipline," he warns, quoting Behramji Malabari, "it will be inert and unleavened . . . at the best you will look at things, and not see through them."

The essay bears the mark of a quartermaster's precision and thoroughness in detail combined with a lawyer's trained, incisive mind and much ripe wisdom. Every little thing touching a student's life in England, no matter how seemingly commonplace or trivial—from shaving, baths and transport, to admission charges, fees and cost of books, various vegetarian menus and their rates, accommodation, and cooking —is exhaustively dealt with. Even such trifles as "matches", "mother of pearl studs", "pins" and "needles and thread" are carefully catalogued with their current prices, and the reason for every omission is punctiliously set down. Here is a specimen:

> The white shirts have been left out because they swell the weekly washing bill . . . . If the fashion goddess is to be adored as it ought to be more or less . . . use the white collars and cuffs and you would lead others to believe that you have white shirts on. This trick is resorted to by thousands in London. . . . And if at times you like to look like a London swell . . . a white shirt will be found mentioned in the list and may be used occasionally.

Notwithstanding the exuberance of language in a budding author beginning to be conscious of the power of words there is no rawness of purpose in what follows.

> The movements alike of students and laymen in England are shrouded in mystery. . . . The writer . . . of the following pages proposes to uncover the mystery. . . . It may bring on me showers of reproaches. . . . It may even cost me friendships. Some would call me rash . . . yet others would fling youth into my face but I am resolved to bear the storm for the sake of truth.
>
> I know there are persons who would tell the same story in a nobler language, who could tell it with greater accuracy, who would tell it with greater fulness. . . . The only reason why I write the book is that no one has as yet written it though badly wanted. . . . Facts which can be determined easily from other sources will not generally find place in this Guide, but the sources will be referred to. The province of the book is not to collect information from the existing books but to attempt that which has not yet been attempted.

Here we have the keynote, as it were, of his whole career—"to attempt that which has not yet been attempted".

The kernel of the Guide is the chapter showing how a student can live in London on £1 a week. Another point of interest is that in it he for the first time quotes from Tolstoy. The quotation is from the essay on "Why People Become Intoxicated" originally written in 1890 by the Count as a preface to a book on *Drunkenness* by Dr. P. S. Alexeyef, the brother-in-law of Aylmer Maude, his future biographer. The English

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translation from which it is taken, appeared in the *Contemporary Review* for February, 1891:

People drink and smoke not merely for want of something better to do to while away the time or to raise their spirits, not because of the pleasure they receive but simply and solely in order to drown the warning voice of conscience. . . . The more a man stupefies himself with these stimulants and narcotics the more stolid quiescent and stagnant he becomes intellectually and morally.

5

In the last week of August, 1893, he resumed his experiment in "Vital Food", which he had been forced to discontinue in Bombay. The experiment, of which he kept careful record, consisted in gradually replacing cooked food by uncooked food. From the very start the venture proved to be ill-fated. He began by substituting two tablespoonfuls of wheat, one of peas, one of rice, two of sultanas, about 20 small nuts, two oranges and a cup of cocoa, for the usual breakfast. The pulses and cereals were soaked overnight. Even so, they took full 45 minutes to masticate. Exhilaration buoyed him at first. He had already been having a cold for two days, with a slight chill in the ears also. In spite of it, in the morning of the first day, he felt very bright. But depression came in the evening, with a slight headache. For dinner he had the usual bread, vegetables etc. From then onward it became an unbroken record of dismal failure.

August 23rd: Feeling hungry, had some peas last evening. Owing to that I did not sleep well, and woke up with a bad taste in the mouth in the morning. Had the same breakfast and dinner as yesterday. Though the day was very dull and it rained a little, I had no headache or cold. Had tea with Baker. This did not agree at all. Felt pains in the stomach.

August 24th: In the morning woke up uneasy with a heavy stomach. Had the same breakfast except that the one spoonful of peas was reduced to half. The usual dinner. Did not feel well. Had feeling of indigestion the whole day.

August 25th: Did not feel well. Had no appetite for dinner. Still I had it. There were undercooked peas for dinner yesterday. That may have to do with the heaviness. Got headache in the latter part of the day. Took some quinine after dinner.

August 26th: The mouth did not taste well throughout the day. Did not feel well either. Had the usual dinner. At 7 p.m. had an orange and a cup of cocoa. I feel hungry (8 a.m.) and yet no desire to eat. The vital food does not seem to agree well.[3]

On the sixth day, thinking that the continued upset of the stomach was the result of peas and rice, he eliminated these but at the same

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time substituted the Vital Food for the usual dinner and breakfast. Breakfast thus consisted of one and a half tablespoonfuls of wheat, two of raisins, ten walnuts and an orange. Towards the latter part of the day he felt better. "At 1 p.m. had one teaspoonful of unsoaked wheat, one tablespoonful of raisins, and fourteen nuts. . . . At Miss Harris's had tea (bread, butter, jam and cocoa). . . . After tea felt very hungry and weak. Had, therefore, a cup of cocoa and an orange on returning home."

August 28th: Except that I felt weak and hungry, I felt all right. The mouth, too, was all right.

August 29th: Woke up well in the morning. For breakfast had one and a half tablespoonfuls of wheat, two of sultanas, one orange and twenty nuts. For dinner had three tablespoonfuls of wheat, two of currants and twenty nuts and two oranges. In the evening had rice, vermicelli and potatoes at Tyab's. Felt weak towards evening.

The weakness now began to grow apace and the mastication of uncooked and unsoaked cereals caused the teeth to ache.

August 30th: Felt very weak. Could not take the usual walks without fatigue.

August 31st: Had a cup of cocoa and an orange in the evening. Felt extremely weak throughout the day. I can take the walks with much difficulty. The teeth, too, are getting weaker, the mouth too sweet.

Sept. 1: Got up in the morning quite tired. Had the same breakfast as yesterday, the same dinner. Feel very weak; teeth are aching. The experiment must be left off. Had tea with Baker as it was his birthday. Felt better after the tea.

Sept. 2: Woke up fresh in the morning (the effect of last evening's tea). Had the old food (porridge, bread, butter, jam and cocoa). Felt ever so much better.

So ended the ill-starred Vital Food experiment. He attributed the failure in the first place to the scantiness of his own knowledge about the Vital Food, which was confined to "a little pamphlet by Mr. Hills, and one or two articles that had recently appeared in *The Vegetarian*"; next, to the fact that no fruits were available in that part of the season except oranges, and milk was a rare commodity in South Africa; and finally to his impatience. "Hardly had I given to the Vital Food a trial for five days when I replaced the usual dinner also by the Vital Food. To expect the stomach, used for twenty years and upwards to cooked food, to assimilate at a stroke uncooked food, is too much." He, however, consoled himself with the reflection that his experiment was not without its use as a warning: "Anyone not possessing the necessary qualifications . . . will hurt both himself and the cause. . . ."[4]

It was a sobering experience. He had been led to try the Vital Food

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by its extreme simplicity, the possibility it seemed to offer of eliminating the botheration of cooking, of being saved from dependence on others, and from any uncleanliness of the landlady, or whosoever supplied him with food. But was the game worth the candle? Was it worthwhile for an ordinary vegetarian, who enjoyed good health and was satisfied with his diet, to devote so much time and attention to such pursuits, he asked. Would it not be better to leave such researches to specialists? "That the ordinary vegetarianism is possible, is conducive to health, he who runs may see. What more then do we want?"

No crank or faddist, he was past the stage when merely the novelty of a thing, however glamorous, could hold him. He was constantly outgrowing himself. His vegetarianism had now become a part of his quest for the meaning of life, with the shifting of emphasis from the physical to the spiritual. Indicative of the ferment that was going on within him is the conclusion:

> Vital Food may have its grand possibilities in store; but it will surely not make our perishable bodies immortal. . . . The vital food will not, cannot, as such, minister to the wants of the soul. And if the highest aim, indeed, the only aim of this life, be to know the soul, then, it is humbly submitted, anything that takes away from our opportunities of knowing the soul, and therefore, also playing with the vital food and other such experiments, is playing away, to that extent, the only desirable aim in life. . . . What a sacrifice of time and trouble to achieve what is after all a selfish end, which falls short of the highest; Life seems too short for these things.

A permanent legacy of the experiment was damaged teeth which later necessitated the removal of two molars.

At the instance of Dr. Oldfield he had been appointed agent for the London Vegetarian Society in South Africa. He began vigorous propaganda for the spread of vegetarian literature. In a letter to *The Vegetarian* he appealed to the Indian vegetarians in England to become members of the London Vegetarian Society and to subscribe to *The Vegetarian* on the ground among others that "the Vegetarian Movement will indirectly aid India politically also, inasmuch as the English Vegetarians will more readily sympathise with the Indian aspirations"[5] — a naive generalisation, one would feel, based on very limited personal experience. A few weeks later he recommended vegetarianism as a cure for the liquor habit. "I may be allowed to say that all those who suffer from the craving for drink, but would like really to be free from the curse, have only to give a trial for at least one month to a diet chiefly consisting of brown bread and oranges or grapes to secure an entire freedom from the craving."[6]

At last the evangel of vegetarianism had the satisfaction of gaining his first convert—"my landlady, who is an Englishwoman". She was

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persuaded to bring up her children also on a vegetarian diet. "But I am afraid she will slide...."[7]

During the Convention at Wellington, he gained still another convert—"a boy six or seven years old who came out with me for a walk" and with whom during a talk about kindness to animals he was able to discuss vegetarianism. "Ever since that time, I am told, the boy has not taken meat. . . . His parents, though not themselves Vegetarians, are believers in the virtue of Vegetarianism. . . . I write this to show how easily you can convince children of the grand truth, and induce them to avoid meat if their parents are not against change."[8]

6

While Gandhiji was having argument with his Evangelical friends over their interpretation of the Christian dogma, he wrote to Edward Maitland, the founder of the Esoteric Christian Union (E.C.U.), to whom he had been introduced by Josiah Oldfield. Maitland sent Gandhiji two of his books—*The New Interpretation of the Bible* and *The Perfect Way or the Finding of Christ.* Of these *The Perfect Way* embodies a lot of mystical ideas of Indian origin which were about the same time also being propagated in the Western world by Mme Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society.

There were two things, Matthew Arnold had said, that must be obvious to any "percipient" person; one, that men could not do without Christianity, and the other, that they could not do with it, as it was. The faith of Christendom, the founders of the E.C.U. averred, was languishing not because there was anything wrong with the Christian faith but because of radical defects in its methods of presentation by its official exponents, which brought it into conflict with Science. In an era of scientific research and critical inquiry, a religion to endure had to satisfy the demands not only of the devotional side of man's nature but of his intellect also. Esoteric Christian Union was one of the several attempts that were made in the latter half of the nineteenth century to reconstruct and present in a form acceptable to modern minds the bases of the Christian faith and morality, that had been badly shattered by the onset of materialism following the rapid advance of scientific discovery.

The starting point of the thesis presented in *The Perfect Way* is that the signs and symbols of Christianity are substantially identical with those of other and earlier religious systems and can be properly understood and appreciated only by the study of "Eastern Philosophy and Pagan Idealism". For Christianity "is the heir of these, and she draws her best blood from their veins".[9] From the very beginning there had been given to mankind one divine Revelation which was constantly re-revealed in whole or in part at various places and periods and known under various names. This revelation constitutes the Gospel of

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Salvation for enabling those who have accepted it "to escape the limitations of Matter and return to the condition of pure Spirit and therein to attain immunity not merely . . . from the consequence of sin, but from the liability to sin."[10]

In brief this Gospel may be summed up thus: God is the sole original Being. He is all love and wisdom, and power and goodness, and man is an individual portion of God. As such he is by nature and constitution good and possessed of divine potentialities, the realisation of which lies within his power.

For an illustration, suppose we are in a meadow covered with grass and flowers, it is early morning, and everything is bespangled with dew. What do we find? "In each dew-drop is everything reflected, from the sun itself down to the minutest object. . . . All is in every dew-drop". Similarly,

> All reflect God. . . . God is in each individual according to his capacity for reflecting God. . . . And the capacity of each . . . depends upon the development and purity of his soul. The soul that fully reflects the Sun, becomes itself a Sun, the brightness of the Divine glory and the express image of the Divine person.[11]

God and the soul being in substance one, all that is in God as universal subsists also in God as individual. "Wherefore God is nothing that man is not. And what man is, that God is likewise."[12] That whereby man is "saved", is not a personal redeemer in the flesh, extraneous to himself but "his own re-birth and At-one-ment in a sense transcending the phenomenal". The process consists in the soul's steadfast aspiration towards God or "the Spirit that is within her", as a result of which the body becomes so permeated and suffused by the Spirit as to have no will of its own. "This unification of the human will with the Divine will, mystically . . . termed the At-one-ment, or reconciliation between man and God"[13] occurring within the individual constitutes the Atonement "to attain which she (the Soul) . . . came forth from God".[14]

This process, being altogether interior to the man, and by its very nature incapable of being performed from without or by another, requires to be enacted anew in each individual. Long before the Christian era, the mystics of Egypt, Persia and India, having gained a knowledge of this process, otherwise known as religion, "in order to illustrate it", selected Osiris, Mithras and Buddha as "names or persons" representing a "full manifestation of the qualities of spirit".[15] The Mystics of the West, who had their headquarters at Alexandria, likewise selected Jesus, using him as a type "to exhibit the history of all souls which attain to perfection". They used physical occurrences as "symbols" and related them as parables. Their method was "to universalise that which was particular, and to spiritualise that which was material".[16]

The mystics spoke from inner experience. The Church, however,

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having, in course of time, lost the mystic faculty, or the "inner spiritual vision", fell a prey to that "besetting sin of priesthoods—Idolatry", and substituted the adoration of the outward symbol for the inner import. The doctrine of Atonement, which in its true and ancient sense was at once "the glory of the saint and the hope of the fallen", thus became, as a result of this perversion, a way of escape "not from sin but from *punishment*",[17] and led the world to sinking deeper and deeper into license and sin.

Christianity failed, not because Christianity was false but because it had been falsified.[18] What was needed, therefore, was not the revelation of a new religious system but "a true interpretation of the religion now existing".[19] The method adopted for this was to treat the narratives in the Gospels not as "historical matter" but rather as "allegories and emblems setting forth eternal truths". The miraculous birth of Jesus, his Ascension and Resurrection, were not "external histories of a certain man" but inner histories of you and me, and all mankind.[20] Christ, the "only Begotten" of the Gospels, similarly, was not a mortal man at all, "but He who from all eternity has been in the bosom of the Father, namely, the Word or *Logos*"[21]—not a person either purely historical or one supernatural "but a principle, a process, a system of life and thought by the observance of which man becomes purified from Matter and transmuted into Spirit."[22]

> And he is *a* Christ who, in virtue of his observance of this process to its utmost extent while yet in the body, constitutes a full manifestation of the qualities of Spirit.[23]

To attain to the perfection of Christ, the spiritual being must be perfected by self-denial and governance, and the body brought into subjection to, and harmony with the spirit "by refining and subliming it, and so heightening its powers as to make it sensitive and responsive to all the motions of the spirit". Therein lies the true meaning and value of asceticism. Divested of its spiritual motive, self-denial is "worse than worthless . . . a churlish refusal of God's good gifts".[24]

As a further aid to perfection are recommended practice of vegetarianism, the simple open air life and close communion with nature, the Spirit must derive its sustenance "from substances the purest and most highly *solarised*, such as the vegetable kingdom alone affords". The striver must not breathe "dead and burnt air—air, that is, the vitality of which is quenched". He must be a "wanderer, a dweller in the plain, and the garden and the mountains, . . . commune with the starry heavens and maintain direct contact with the great electric currents (*sic*) of living air and with the unpaved grass and earth of the planet, going bare foot and oft bathing his feet."[25] He must be "without fear and without desire save towards God", and have courage to be absolutely poor and absolutely chaste.

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Bound by the vows of Abstinence, Prayer, Meditation, Watchfulness, Self-Restraint, Fearlessness and Voluntary Poverty, the aspirant must strive on till he has attained the final victory over the body. He then becomes freed from all vows. "He has undergone all his ordeals, and has freed his will. . . . He is free of Matter and will never again have a phenomenal body."[26]

All this must have appealed strongly to Gandhiji's ardent idealism. "I greatly liked Maitland's books," he says. "They seemed to support Hinduism."[27] Of special interest in the doctrine of *The Perfect Way* is the interpretation of the statement in the *Book of Genesis* that God created man "in his own Image—Male and Female". This implies, it is explained, that "in order to be made in the image of God, the individual must comprise within himself, the qualities—masculine and feminine —of existence, and be, spiritually, both man and woman." The symbolism of the soul's progress from the state represented by Eve to that represented by the Virgin Mary is similarly explained as follows: "Only when she has exchanged the innocence that comes of ignorance, for the impeccability that comes of full knowledge, is she no longer in danger of relapse."[28] Many years afterwards, this found a strong echo in Gandhiji's description of himself as "half a woman", and his assertion, in the teeth of the current orthodox conception of the ideal of Brahmacharya, that Brahmacharya that depended for its safety on the "nine-fold wall of protection", was no Brahmacharya. To be worthy of its name Brahmacharya must not be "innocence of the child rooted in ignorance", but the "perfect innocence of a grown up person who has full knowledge and understanding of sex".[29]

There is no doubt that Edward Maitland's writings left a deep impression on Gandhiji's mind. It provided an answer to a number of difficulties in regard to current interpretations of the Bible that had troubled him. His reply to the Plymouth Brothers' argument in praise of the doctrine of Atonement, it will have been noted, echoes almost to a word the language of *The Perfect Way*. At a time when, in absence of a competent guide to initiate him into his own religion, he was feeling lost, Maitland's writings gave him a reasoned presentation of some of the basic tenets of Hinduism like the doctrine of Rebirth, Transmigration, essential identity of God and the individual soul and salvation from the possibility of a fall by the realisation of the Supreme. Later he applied Maitland's method of allegorical interpretation of the Gospels to the Indian Epics—the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*—and the *Gita* which, he insisted, should be regarded not as historical works but philosophical poems presented in a historical setting. He was very much taken up, too, by Maitland's insistence on "reasoned faith"[30] and later declared that while faith transcends reason, it must not contradict reason.

Membership of the Esoteric Brotherhood did not commit anyone individually to any particular tenet or view, but only to a general appro-

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bation of the Society's principles. Gandhiji became an enthusiastic propagandist of the Esoteric Christian Union's literature. His letter-head now bore the inscription:

M. K. Gandhi
Agent for
The Esoteric Christian Union and
The London Vegetarian Society.

"The system of thought expounded by the books advertised," he wrote in a letter to the *Natal Mercury*, "is . . . a system of religion which teaches universality. . . . In that system, there is no reviling Mohomed or Buddha . . . it reconciles the other religions with Christianity which, in the opinion of the authors, is nothing but one mode (among many) of the presentation of the same eternal truth."[31] A few months later, he again wrote in the *Natal Advertiser*: "The system (of thought) represented by the Union establishes the unity and common source of all the great religions of the world, and points out . . . the utter inadequacy of materialism which boasts of having given the world a civilization which was never witnessed before, . . . all the while . . . forgetting that its greatest achievements are the invention of the most terrible weapons of destructions, the awful growth of anarchism, the frightful disputes between capital and labour, the wanton and diabolical cruelty inflicted on innocent, dumb, living animals in the name of science, 'falsely so called'."[32] If there was any one who found the current materialism inadequate for the needs of his soul and had a craving for a better life, he had only to read the books advertised, and "I promise that after a perusal, he will find himself a better man".[33] The annual Report of the Esoteric Christian Union for the year 1894 contains the following appreciative reference to his labours on its behalf:

> In Belfast, Ireland, and Durban, South Africa, also centres have been established . . . the active spirit of the movement in the latter place being a Hindoo gentleman who is practising there as a lawyer. His report of the progress made, and interest excited thus far, is most encouraging. . . .

Unlike Theosophy, which also emphasised the essential unity of all religions, the Esoteric Christian Union did not repudiate the Christian Church but held that though Christianity was substantially identical with other systems of religion, as for instance, Buddhism; it represented a "further development" of their common doctrine to a "higher, because more interior, region of the consciousness"; being to the other systems what head is to the heart; the mind to the soul, "both of which are . . . indispensible to a complete religion".[34] Also, while not questioning the occult part of the Theosophical creed or the Theosophical doctrine of "a great Hierarchy of Adepts" or perfected souls, who supervise "all our world's processes, visible and invisible",[35] the Esoteric

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Christian Union excluded from its scope "occultism" and confined itself to Mysticism, using that term in the sense of spiritualism as opposed to materialism.[36]

After the arrival of *The Perfect Way* in India in the spring of 1882, Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland were invited by the Chief of the Theosophical Society to join that Society in the capacity of President and Vice-President respectively of their British branch. In June, 1883, they were elected and joined the British Theosophical Society, then known as the London Lodge, in that capacity. But owing to the opposition to their introduction of what they termed "Christian Theosophy" they withdrew from it and founded the Hermetic Society that preceded the Esoteric Christian Union. This was followed by a controversy between the founders of the two organisations which was prolonged and often bitter. Gandhiji, however, was either not aware of these differences or chose to ignore them as being of little practical consequence. "During my stay here," he wrote from Durban in the following year, "I intend to spread as much as possible information about Theosophy. To me there is little difference between Theosophy and Esoteric Christianity."[37]

While Edward Maitland lived, Gandhiji regularly corresponded with him. Unfortunately, none of the letters has survived. Gandhiji destroyed them as *impedimenta* with a lot of other papers when he started practising the ideal of non-possession. It was the only correspondence, he once told me, which he regretted having destroyed.

The only letter on the subject that has come to light is addressed to a Mrs. Lewis, daughter of a Cornishman, who after the death of her first husband, William Burrows, married a Greek gentleman Dr. Platon Eustathios Drakoules, a relation of Mr. Venizelos. She was a close friend and admirer of Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland, and one of the founders of the Christian Esoteric Union. The letter is dated Durban, August 4, 1894. In it Gandhiji asks for Esoteric Christian Union's literature to be sent to him which he offers to advertise at his own expense—"five copies of *The Perfect Way*, 5 of *Clothed with the Sun* and 10 of *The New Interpretation*, and other books." The rest of the letter is a sharp rebuke to his correspondent for insinuation of doubt as to the bona fides of the author of one of Esoteric Christian Union's publications, in which she had referred to her acquaintance with the "Souls" or disembodied spirits.

> If you do not think much of the 'Souls', what position is the book to occupy in respectable literature. If the author has written what is absolutely true from personal observation, the book cannot be lightly treated. If it is an attempt to delude the people into a belief in real truths by fascinating falsehoods the book deserves the highest condemnation possible. For we will not learn truth by means of falsehoods. Of course I write this without meaning the slightest disrespect for the author of whom I know nothing. She may be

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a lady of the highest probity and truth. I only repeat that to appreciate the Souls acquaintance with the author's character is absolutely necessary.

And this inspite of the fact that he himself disapproved of the belief that had been assailed.

He maintained his connection with the Christian Esoteric Union until, like its forerunner the Hermetic Society, it also fell into abeyance after the death of its founder on October 2, 1897.

7

Just as Gandhiji's Christian friends were trying to convert him to Christianity, his Muslim friends were trying to induce him to study Islam. As a seeker after truth he welcomed their efforts to show to him the light, obtained a copy of Sale's translation of the *Koran* and other books on Islam and read them with due care and reverence.

The more he read of other religions, the more he was weighed down with the feeling of ignorance about the tenets of his own faith. Hinduism is a boundless ocean. There is hardly any approach to religion or form of religious thought that has not found a place in it. But as a result of its millennial growth, much dross is often found mixed in it with the precious metal, many a pearl of truth is overlaid with the encrustation of ages. To separate the essential from the incidental, the noble metal from the base, the pearl from the encrustation, needs the guidance of an expert. What was Gandhiji to make, for instance, of the institution of untouchability and the status assigned to women in historical Hinduism, or of the mutually contradictory texts in the scriptures about non-killing etc.?

In his perplexity he wrote to Shrimad Rajchandra, addressing him in one of his letters 27 questions. He followed it up by correspondence which continued off and on till the latter's death in 1901. The questions related to the nature of the self and God, *Moksha* or liberation; the divinity of Rama and Krishna, and whether faith in their divinity could by itself lead to salvation; the truth about the doctrine of reincarnation and transmigration; the origin, the antiquity and the authenticity of the *Vedas*; whether they could be regarded literally as "the inspired Word of God"; and if so why not also the Bible and the *Koran*? Again, were the soul and the universe both eternal—without beginning and without end, or was final extinction in the Universal Spirit the end of the one and dissolution or utter annihilation that of the other? Was evil inseparable from existence, or could its complete abolition be envisaged? Finally, he asked whether the Christian Missionaries' claim that Christianity was the greatest, the sublimest and the only true religion, and the Christ the "Only Begotten of God", could be sustained; and whether the fulfilment of the prophecies of the Old Testament in the person of

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Jesus be accepted as an "infallible" proof of the divinity of Christ, as claimed by the Missionaries.

Shrimad Rajchandra replied in a letter dated October 20, 1894. Some of his answers are of too abstruse a nature for recapitulation here. The more important ones may, however, be indicated in brief:

God is Atman, freed from all bonds of *Karma*. Atman, in its pristine state, is pure consciousness, total intelligence, all-strength, all-knowledge. There is no First Cause mightier than or exterior to the Atman in its pure, pristine state.

* * *

Both the Atman and the Universe are eternal—without beginning and without end. My reason cannot envisage either final extinction or permanent liberation of all Atmans nor dissolution, in the sense of utter annihilation, of the entire Cosmos. Both Cosmos and the Atmans are in a perpetual state of flux, and will endure for all time.

* * *

Passions like hatred and attachment, greed and lust, etc., bind the soul to matter and are the cause of its bondage. Liberation or *Moksha* is complete freedom from these.

* * *

Good and evil are like any other category of thought imperishable. But irrespective of whether or not all beings can be finally delivered from evil, no one has a right to use the argument of the impossibility or otherwise of total and final abolition of evil as an excuse for resting in evil. For every individual is free to choose between good and evil, and it is his moral duty to embrace the one and eschew the other.

* * *

The antiquity of the *Vedas* cannot be denied. Before the Buddha and Mahavir were the *Vedas*. But antiquity does not necessarily mean perfection. Later revelations may possibly be more perfect. All categories of thought have existed from the very beginning and will continue so to exist for all time but their expression or outward form varies. Both the Vedic and the Jaina ways of life may be said to have existed from the beginning; the question to be considered is which one of these answers the needs of the soul best.

* * *

The possibility of Christ's miracles cannot be ruled out, though the miracle of bringing the dead back to life presents philosophical difficulties. But all the miracles of Christ pale into insignificance before the omnipotence of the perfected Atman.

* * *

Moksha can be attained only by complete deliverance from the passions of hatred and attachment and the resulting ignorance. If faith in the divinity of Rama and Krishna in the case of a particular individual brings about this consummation, *Moksha* could, in that case, be said to have been the fruit of such faith.

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One question put by the young inquirer was deadly. "Would you wish me to allow a poisonous snake to bite me or should I kill it, supposing it were not possible for me by any other means to prevent it from biting me?"

The reply was unrelenting. "If you have realised the transitory nature of the perishable body and the eternal glory of the immortal soul and its boundless potentialities, you will not wish to barter the latter for prolonging the momentary existence of the former. The question, therefore, is not what *I* would wish you to do, but what *you* should wish your choice to be. That choice will depend on the degree of your illumination or enlightenment."

He made short work of the Christian missionaries' exclusive claims in regard to Christianity and its founder, while not detracting an iota from his respect for either. He asked Gandhiji not to lose heart but patiently to make a deeper study of Hinduism. "On a dispassionate view of the question," he wrote in effect in one of his letters, "I feel convinced that no other religion boasts such wonderful spiritual discoveries or shows such profundity of insight into the problem of the self as the religion propounded by the ancient seers and sages of India."[38]

Shrimad Rajchandra's letter, Gandhiji says, "somewhat pacified me". He read some of the books that Shrimad Rajchandra had sent him. They included *Panchikaran*, *Maniratna Mala*, *Mumukshu Prakaran* of *Yogavasishtha*, and Haribhadra Suri's classic—*Shaddarshana Sammuchchaya*. He corresponded with some other religious authorities in India also.

The Jaina system of thought does not insist on conformity to any formal religious dogma or creed. It only sets forth an ideal—the ideal of the *Jina*, one who has conquered the world. Everybody, according to the Jaina philosophy, is born essentially and potentially a Jaina. A person is entitled to call oneself a Jaina to the extent to which he has realised his true nature. Consistently with the spirit of his philosophy, Shrimad Rajchandra, unlike the Christian missionaries, did not try to "convert" Gandhiji. He only provided the guidance that Gandhiji needed and encouraged him to proceed in his search for truth along the path that he had chosen for himself. By his personal example he made the ancient truths of Hinduism, which might have otherwise remained to Gandhiji as mere abstractions, live. He introduced to him the fundamental spiritual concepts and moulds of religious thought that constitute India's glorious ancient heritage—the same that had nourished Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda, and Swami Dayananda on the one hand and the Theosophists, the Transcendentalists and the mystics of the Esoteric Christian Union on the other.

Shrimad Rajchandra finally enabled Gandhiji to find the answer to the question he had been struggling with from his childhood days, viz. which was the one true religion that he could adopt and reject the others as false.[39] It may be summed up thus: Religion is not an

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'ism'. It is not merely intellectual knowledge of or belief in any set of doctrines. It is an innate attribute of the soul. It is that which enables us to define our duties in life as a human being, and establish correct relationship with our fellows. But before this we have to have a knowledge of our own true nature. Religion is therefore the means in the first place to self-realisation or realisation of the true nature of the self.

The knowledge of this means is not confined to any particular people or country. It is the common heritage of all mankind. But in our empyrical state it lies dormant within us. Nor does it essentially differ in different beings whether in the East or in the West, or in individuals professing different religious creeds. Those who have studied different religions have borne testimony that in essence they are all one and the same; only the form differs. For instance, Shankaracharya declared: "Brahm is the only reality; world is an illusion." The Holy *Koran* has affirmed: "God is one. He alone is, and there is naught else." The Bible says: "I and my Father are one." In other words, whatever there is in the universe is a manifestation of the one Supernal Reality. It is the attempts of imperfect beings, with limited vision, to describe the universal, each from his own angle, that have given rise to endless confusion. They are at the root of all religious wrangles and disputes.

Imperfect beings as we all are, said Gandhiji, we advance towards our goal of attaining the Supreme, by taking the help of less imperfect beings than ourselves. They are the world teachers, or the founders of different religions. But in the course of our spiritual journey, there invariably comes a stage beyond which no external guide can help—not even the scriptures. In the last lap of the journey the aspirant has to struggle all by himself, guided only by his inner experience. As Shrimad Rajchandra sang in his rhapsody of the soul's pilgrimage:

> All-knowing *Jinas* in meditation rapt,
> Beheld the glory of that blessed state,
> To which they speechless witness bore —
> in wonder lost.
>
> No mortal tongue its glory may declare,
> The glory of that bliss ineffable,
> But he who strives and battles without cease,
> Shall find forsooth within the inmost cell
> Of his own being that great experience.

In other words, ultimately by the self alone is Self realised.

"Shri Rajchandra," Gandhiji wrote in a sketch of the *Kavi* (Poet), "often used to liken different religions to pens or folds in which animals are confined for their protection. But a seeker after liberation seeks not protection but freedom. He has no need, therefore, to belong to any fold or to adopt any denominational label."

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"Personally I believe," Gandhiji continued, "that in relation to their respective devotees, all religions are perfect. So far as the rest are concerned, they are all imperfect. Independently considered, all religions are perfect as well as imperfect. For after one has attained a certain stage of spiritual development, even the prescriptive formulas of the *Shastras* become a fetter on further progress.

"This, however, holds good only in regard to those who have outgrown all attributes or modes of relative existence. In the words of Shrimad Rajchandra, therefore, it is unnecessary in our work-a-day world for anyone to give up his own religion and adopt another in order to attain liberation. Everybody can attain liberation by following his own. For liberation means complete freedom from all attachment and hatred and this is the common goal of all religions."[40]

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CHAPTER XV

BITTER BREW

1

DURING THE six months that had elapsed since Gandhiji had landed in Port Natal, a stranger in a strange land, he had witnessed anomalies and contradictions that would bewilder any man. South of the Suez it was a queer world of inverted values where commonly accepted norms of civilised conduct seemed not to hold. There were paradoxes galore that puzzled and perplexed.

Of the two, the Boer and the Briton, the Briton took a tolerant view of the brown skin and was critical of the Boer for his rigid enforcement of the colour bar. The Boer, on the other hand, brutal in his assertion of racial superiority, regarded the Briton as a hypocrite, who rode the high horse in his "man-and-brother" talk about the dusky indigenous population, but had devised labour systems not very different from chattle slavery.

Then there was the missionary of the Dutch Reformed Church, who would not let a dark skinned man attend Church alongside of a white man, and there was his English counterpart, ready enough to befriend the black man and back him against his Boer master, but not a whit behind the latter in his belief in the white superiority. Finally, there was the Coloured man—the "half-caste", despised both by black and white, but despising the black even more than he was despised by him while deferential and cringing towards the white man, who was the author of his calamity.

These conundrums and many other that we shall come across in the course of this tale have their explanation in the story of South Africa's long past, and the struggle for supremacy between Boer and Briton, representing two different ways of life—one pastoral and patriarchal, the other industrial and urban.

The outlook of the white man—whether Boer or Briton—on the Indian question was only a projection of his attitude towards the "native". The Briton no less than the Boer being a usurper in the "native's" land, his attitude towards the Indian community was essentially not different from the Boer's. However much he might rail at the latter for his "shameful treatment" of "Her Majesty's" subject it was only a stick to beat the Boer with. The difference between them, if any, was only that between half a dozen and six.

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A historian of South Africa has referred to what he has called "the hard and criminal birth of civilisation" in the Dark Continent as one of those "irreconcilable facts of our present fallible state" that can never be "justified in the court of conscience or at the bar of that immutable justice by which our world is said to be governed", however much we may try to rationalise it. The story of European penetration into Africa is a scroll written in blood and stained with tears. The colour bar that confronted Gandhiji in South Africa and the extraordinary virulence it exhibited had its roots in four centuries of conflict between black and white and the deep scars it had left that are still festering. The irrational fears that the colour question aroused and still continues to arouse on both sides of the line also can be explained and properly understood only in that context.

2

Renowned for a long time by virtue of its half-way position between the Orient and the West, as a meeting place of people from all lands, South Africa was discovered, about the same time as America, by the Portuguese. But it was the Dutch who established the first European colony in the Cape after the power of the Portuguese had declined. In 1602, only two years after the English East India Company, the Great Dutch East India Company was formed to carry on trade with the East, which was then the dream of all maritime nations of Europe. A half century after, van Riebeeck was sent to establish for vessels sailing to and from the East Indies, a revictualling station at the Table Bay. A fort was built and the place was developed as a rendezvous and a stronghold. The Cape came to be known as "The Tavern of the Seas".

The Dutch were in course of time joined by the English, the French Huguenots and the Low Germans. Most of these pioneers mingled and a new race resulted—the Boers. They developed a character of their own, and a dialect, which differed considerably from the Dutch—*die taal* or "the language". Today it is known as Afrikaans—the language of Afrikaanders or Afrikaners—white men of Boer descent.

The Company offered such low prices for farm produce that the white settlers began to import Negro slaves from West Africa, from Madagascar and from Malaya. The various coloured races thus brought together also gradually merged with one another, and with further intermixture of the blood of the white settlers and sailors produced a separate people called the Cape Coloured People. They today number one and a third million and speak the same language as the Afrikaners.

Two main groups of population thus came to live side by side in the Tavern of the Seas—on the one side a European population of Company's servants, farmers, traders, skilled artisans etc., and on the

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other, coloured men "whose lot it was to be the hewers of wood and the drawers of water".[1]

The original inhabitants of the Cape—the Bushmen and the Hottentots were steadily pushed back by the white settlers. The Bushmen were a gifted race of nomadic hunters with a talent for acting, dance, music and painting, whose paintings are today sought, and copied by scientists in the caves of Rhodesia and South West Africa. Short statured with "hollow back, hollow cheeks and yellow Mongol faces", they had a language of "clicks and croaks". They used poisoned arrows, subsisted on wild fruit and insects, and lived in the clefts of the valleys or in the holes of the earth. But they knew the secrets of nature that are a closed book to the civilised man, and "spoke to birds and beasts in their own language". They refused to come to terms with civilisation, and with the exception of a few thousand in the reserves of the Kalahari desert, have today become extinct.

Bigger than Bushmen, the Hottentots were a primitive, pastoral people. They also had a language with clicks "but no croaks". They succumbed in large numbers to the ravages of drink and the diseases introduced by the white people. Such of them as survived were made into slaves by the white men. Their blood, mixed with that of the whites, survives in the bodies of the coloured people of the Cape.

Very few women had come with the white settlers. To solve the problem of the shortage of marriageable white women the Dutch Company encouraged mixed marriages. The first known mixed marriage was between Jan Wouter and Catherine, a Bengali woman freed from slavery, daughter of an Antonie of Bengal. Van Riebeeck, as a mark of his approval, promoted van Meerhof to the rank of a surgeon after he had married Eva, a Hottentot woman. But as the society became more and more settled, mixed marriages became less acceptable and the white and the coloured groups became more separate.

The Boers were cattle farmers. They wanted so much land that they need do nothing else but let their cattle browse on it. It was a Boer's dream, it is said, "not to have to see the next man's smoke".[2] They looked upon taxation as robbery and resented all government as "interference". To escape from it they trekked. The word Trekboer means "a farmer who treks about, looking for grazing".

Their isolation and lack of social restraints of civilised society might have led to complete degeneration of the pioneer settlers at the frontier. And in many cases it did have that result. Many settlers went "native", took African wives, and indulged in polygamy and concubinage. They showed little respect for "native" life, and "doubted the criminality" of killing Kaffirs and Bushmen. The frontiersmen, reported Commissary de Mist from his office in Cape Town to Amsterdam in 1802, had turned "half wild" and suffered from "complete corruption of their moral sense", which he attributed to "the lack of social

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intercourse with civilised individuals, the monotonous life. . ., the daily hunt, the continual diet of meat. . . ."[3] Two things, however, helped to arrest the process of degeneration—first, the influence of women, who with their keener sense of the decencies of life prevented the men from sliding; the next the Trekboers' religion.

The religion that the Trekboers brought with them was the religion of Calvin, with the doctrine of predestination, that enabled the white man "so easily to regard black as inferior".[4] They were strict observers of family prayers. There was not a home without its family Bible. This was read regularly at their prayers. But the Bible meant to them the Old Testament rather than the New Testament, and in course of time they came to identify themselves with the people of the Old Testament—"a chosen people . . . whom God would lead to the promised land".[5]

The state of constant warfare with the "natives", in which the Dutch settlers lived, led to the organisation of the Commando system. Under it every male settler was liable to be called for military service. Military exercises were held for a week once a year, when every settler was required to report himself at the muster with "a horse, saddle and bridle, and three days' rations", which consisted usually of *biltong* (dried meat) and rusks, for himself and his Hottentot groom. This, and the exigencies of the daily hunt made every adult Trekboer an expert horseman and a crack shot.

3

The fortunes of European settlements in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, whether in the old world or the new, followed closely those of their parent countries. Towards the close of the eighteenth century Britain and France were at war, Holland had been overrun by France, the Prince of Orange had taken refuge in England. To secure the Cape from the French annexation the English, with a mandate from the Prince of Orange, occupied it first in 1795 and again in 1806—this time permanently.

The coming of the British to the Cape was followed by an expansion of missionary activity and humanitarian reform. During the eighteenth century England had an evangelical revival, which began when John Wesley was expelled from the Anglican Church and founded Methodism. Humanitarian reform was one of the facets of this movement. Following the industrial revolution in England there had been much social misery. A great squaring with the national conscience was in consequence taking place. It was the era of slums and industrial slavery, working class poverty, and chronic unemployment, child labour and harsh factory laws, the Malthusian doctrine of population and its

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heartless corollary, the Iron Law of Wages, which inspired Hoods' lament in his "Song of the Shirt" that

"bread should be so dear
And flesh and blood so cheap."

The unreformed Parliament under the stranglehold of the reactionary Tory landed gentry, who were interested only in keeping the price of corn high to protect their pocket, was ever ready ruthlessly to suppress any movement of popular protest. There were bread riots. When the people of Manchester demonstrated in an open air meeting to demand reform, they were mown down by the military at the Peterloo Massacre. The mass of the non-conformist followers of Wesley belonged either to the working class or to the new middle class. The Evangelicals by combining with the liberal Whigs, radicals and non-conformists could exert considerable political pressure on the Parliament and their influence came to be felt in all ranks of society. It was they who inspired and initiated most of the great nineteenth century reforms. The abolition of the Slave Trade in 1807, and of slavery in the British Empire in 1833, which so profoundly affected the history of South Africa, was largely their work.

Philanthropy at home had its counterpart in missionary activity abroad. Between 1776 and 1795 were established the Society for Missions in Africa and the East—which later became the Church Missionary Society,—the Baptists' and Methodists' mission societies and the London Mission Society.

Of all things English the settlers hated the missionary and his philanthropy most. To the missionary the indigenous folk were souls to be saved. To the settlers they were only farm hands. The Hottentot converts flocked to the missionary stations as an escape from the hard conditions of life on the farm, and demanded cessation of work on Sundays to attend church. The white settler complained that the missionary was "stealing" his labour and "spoiling" the Hottentots. The missionary regarded the Hottentots "as freemen who should not be compelled to work, and who had civil rights that could be defended in a court of law against their employers if need be".[6] The Colonists alleged that the missionary stations had become "sanctuaries for Hottentots, thieves and deserters", where they found a ready ear for their complaints against their white masters; and that in the disputes between masters and servants, the missionary was more inclined to take the latter's side against the former.

Johannes Theodorus van der Kemp, a missionary of the London Mission Society and a follower of Jean Jacques Rousseau, under the influence of Rousseau's teaching that "the life of the savage is simple and perfect", freed and married the coloured daughter of a slave woman, whose only possessions were "two sheep skins and a string of beads", and began to preach the doctrine that "all men being alike in the eyes

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of God, it was the Christian duty of the holiest to marry without regard to the colour of the skin."[7] His colleague Dr James Read and several other missionaries followed his example. In the eyes of the white colonists this was abomination. Today marriages or sexual relations between the whites and the Coloureds are prohibited in Dr Verwoerd's South Africa under the "Immorality Act".

Midway between the two stood the British official. As an administrator he sympathised with the white farmers' difficulties and regarded the missionary more or less as a nuisance, but he was afraid of the backing for the missionary in London. He did nothing to interfere with the rights of the slave-owners, but he had to direct the courts to see that rights of both slaves and servants to good treatment, which the law granted to them, were respected. The officials, the missionaries and the colonists thus came to live in an "uneasy triangular relationship."[8] Read sent to his Society in London a report in which he accused farmers of cruelty to their Hottentot servants and withholding wages. As a result the Governor had to order the newly instituted Circuit Court of 1812 —"Black Circuit", as the Boers called it — to try the cases. Fifty farmers were accused, and a number of them convicted.

Under the colonial law, a Hottentot was compelled to remain in one district unless he had a written permission called a pass to move, and the Hottentot children, born on an employer's farm and living there for eight years, were to be "apprenticed" for a further 10 years to that employer. This was only a step removed from slavery. Determined to establish the free status of Hottentots, Dr John Philip sent strongly worded reports to his Society in London and himself followed there to rouse the Evangelicals and the Non-conformists. In 1828 an ordinance was passed, known as the Hottentot Charter, which repealed the previous discriminatory proclamations and placed Hottentots on an equal footing with Europeans. The ordinance established the principle of legal equality between the white and the black. As a result, when a decade and a half later the Cape Colony was granted self-government, colour bar found no place in its constitution.

The rift between Boer and Briton thus went right down to the bottom. The two ideas introduced by the British simultaneously in the Cape —"equality of all men before God, and equality of all men before the law" — were to the Boer settlers "a direct contradiction of the Word of God".[9] Even more repugnant to them was the mingling of the white blood with the coloured. Gone were the days when the surgeon van Meerhof could marry Eva, with the approval of the Commandant. In the struggle for survival in which they were now engaged the only relationship between the white frontiersmen and the indigenous population that outnumbered them could be one of implacable hostility.

Presently things happened that widened the rift. In 1815 a Hottentot servant complained of the treatment he had received from a Dutch

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employer at Slachter's Nek. Summoned to appear before the court on a charge of cruelty to a coloured servant the employer refused. A party of Hottentot soldiers was thereupon sent under a European officer to arrest him. He resisted arrest and was killed. His brother and friends vowed vengeance. There was a rising with bloodshed. It was suppressed and five of the ring leaders were publicly hanged by Lord Charles Somerset, the Tory Governor of the Cape. Slachter's Nek became to the Boers a never-to-be-forgotten symbol of British oppression.

Following this the British Government began gradually to anglicise the Afrikaaner Dutch, substituted English for Dutch as the official language, which the Boers did not understand, replaced the Dutch *landdrosts* by English magistrates, and Dutch rix dollars by the English pound. This further accentuated the Dutch resentment.

On top of it came the emancipation of slaves. In 1833, as a result of the agitation set up by Wilberforce just a month before his death, Parliament in England abolished slavery in the British Empire, emancipating some 800,000 slaves, of whom about 29,000 were at the Cape. The compensation for the South African slaves that the Boers evaluated at £28,000,000 was fixed at £1,250,000 and that too was to be proved and made payable in London. Not many Boer farmers could afford to go to London to avail themselves of it. Speculators visited their farms and bought up the claims for a song.

Slavery was not very profitable to the English settlers who were mostly traders. But it was the foundation of the Dutch farmers' agricultural system. They were hit hard by its abolition. What galled them even more, however, was the "ungodly equality" between black and white—former master and slave—that the British had decreed. Anna Steenkamp, a Voortrekker woman, sister of Pieter Retief, the leader of one of the groups of the Voortrekkers, referring to what she called "shameful and unjust proceedings" in regard to the freeing of "our slaves", wrote:

> And yet it is not so much their freeing which drove us to such lengths, as their being placed on an equal footing with Christians, contrary to the laws of God, and the natural distinctions of race and colour, so that it was intolerable for any decent Christian to bow down beneath such a yoke; wherefore we rather withdrew in order to preserve our doctrines in purity.[10]

The Boers had had enough of it. They did what they had done before; they sold their farms, loaded their valuables in their tilted wagons and trekked with their herds and flocks across the Vaal. "We quit this colony," wrote Retief, in a manifesto dated February 2, 1837, "under the full assurance that the English Government has nothing more to require of us, and will allow us to govern ourselves without its interference in future." The emigrants were leaving their homes, the manifesto concluded, "and 'entering a wild and dangerous

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territory' . . . in firm reliance on God".[11] Between 1836 and 1840 six thousand of them left. Among them was a lad of ten—Paul Kruger—who sixty-three years later led the Boers against the British in the Anglo-Boer War.

4

While the early Trekboers were trekking northwards, another mass migration of a dark people, with Asiatic blood in their veins, was taking place southwards from the north. They were the Bantu speaking people who had been displaced from their original homelands, somewhere near the highlands of East Africa, by the depradations of the slave hunters that had resulted in twelve million slaves being taken to America and the West Indies during three hundred years of slave trade from the West Coast of Africa alone, and set up a steady stream of mass migration sweeping southward and ever southward.

The word Bantu means "a people, or human beings—not mere dumb animals". The East African Arabs called them Kaffirs i.e. infidels or non-believers in Mahomed. Later the word Kaffir came to be applied by the Europeans to Africans in general, Kaffirland—the Kaffraria of today—being the region where Europeans first met them. The use of terms "Kaffir", "Bantu", "natives" and "Negro" for the descendents of the original black population of Africa, these days is considered offensive. Modern Bantus prefer to call themselves "Africans". But it must not be forgotten that they used these terms to describe one another and themselves till recently. Some of these words have been incorporated in official terminology, as for instance, in "Native reserves", "Department of Native Affairs", "Kaffraria", "Kaffir gold" etc., and when one is speaking descriptively or in a certain historical sense their use cannot be avoided.

The Bantus were divided into two groups—Zulu-Xosa and Basuto-Bechuana, each group being further divided and subdivided into tribes and clans—like Matabele, Mashona, Pondo, Tembu and so on. Ba and Be in Basuto-Bechuana, again, mean "people". The more sophisticated Bechuanas and Basutos today call themselves simply 'Tswana or 'Sotho.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the most important of them—the Xosa-Zulu tribe settled in the eastern part of South Africa as far south as the present Port Elizabeth in the region named after them—Kaffraria. Ama Zulus, "The People of the Heaven", settled in Natal.

Ama Xosa went further south and penetrated the Cape Province, where they came in contact with the Hottentots fleeing before the white settlers, and, along with Hottentot blood, incorporated in their speech the Hottentot "click".

Shortly after black and white met in the Eastern Cape, in 1779,

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there began a series of "Kaffir wars" that lasted a hundred years, and had their origin in the insult offered by the Tembu Paramount Chief to the Xosa Paramount Chief suggesting a lobola of only a hundred cattle for his daughter. Lobola is dowry in reverse, being "bride-insurance in cattle" that the parents of the bridegroom offer as purchase money to the parents of the bride. The amount of lobola was regarded as the measure of the prestige of the tribe to which the bride belonged.

The outstanding event of these hundred years was the spectacular rise to power of Chaka, the Zulu Chief, sometimes, known as the Napolean of the Zulus from his military prowess as well as his thirst for blood and glory.

Reputed to be one of the "finest composer of songs, a leading dancer and the wittiest punster", Chaka was a man of strong passions, with an enormous capacity for endurance, who performed one of the most gruelling of marches on record. On hearing of his mother's illness, he set out on foot although it was late in the evening, and reached his mother's kraal, more than sixty miles away, before noon the next day, traversing a succession of hills and deep valleys that lay across his path. In the darkness of the night he tore through thorn-bush country and over rough and mostly pathless ground. The white physician Fynn, who accompanied him, could scarcely keep up though mounted.

When his mother died, ten of the most beautiful girls in Zululand were sent into the grave with her. Sixty thousand warriors with their long shields and one hundred thousand bellowing cattle were brought to the place of mourning. Several men were executed on the spot by the order of the Chief as a measure of his grief. This was followed by a frenzy of shouting, dancing, and chanting accompanied by an indiscriminate slaughter in the course of which 7,000 perished. "Three thousand old women were killed that their sons might share the grief of Chaka; three thousand cows were killed that even kine might know what it was to lose a mother." For a year no cultivation was to be allowed; none might work, fight, sing, dance or conceive. No milk was to be used, but as drawn from the cow it was to be spilled on the earth. All women found with child (thereafter) during the year were, with their husbands, to be put to death.[12] 12,000 warriors were detailed to guard the grave for one year and 15,000 head of cattle were set apart for their use. At the end of three months of mourning the country was swept by a famine, the fields were overgrown with weeds.

Chaka organised his army in *impis* or regiments, and subjected it to an iron discipline. Singers in his time were blinded the better to dream battle songs, and old and useless men occasionally taken out and put to death. Such was the awe in which he was held that at his word, it is said, whole "regiments . . . walked over cliffs or into the sea".[13] To make an example of cowards he had thousands of warriors,

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who had not given a good account of themselves in two of his campaigns, executed before the assembled people. Those who wept for "cowards" were hauled out and made to share their fate. After this unsuccessful warriors "preferred to die in battle rather than be killed on their return home".[14]

In the course of ten years Chaka raised Zulus from an obscure tribe to a powerful and widely feared nation that conquered and spread devastation throughout what now is Natal and Zululand. He destroyed or nearly destroyed one hundred tribes by his ferocious wars. The remnants were sent radiating in all directions as fugitives. Whole tribes and leading generals fled from him in terror. One of them, Moselikatze, being defeated, fled across the Drakensburg mountains, taking half the nation with him. He absorbed the people whom he conquered so that they were proud to call themselves Matabele—the "people with the Long Shields"—from those long shields, covering the whole of the body, that he had copied from Chaka and Chaka from his patron and putative father Dingaswayo, who had devised it along with the short spear for close combat. The fleeing fugitives in their turn killed and conquered and conquered and killed till, it is estimated, one to two millions perished. His own name meant "Pathway of Blood". The wholesale destruction of crops and stocks caused by his wars led to terrible famines. Many were driven to cannibalism.

Mantatisi, the Batlokwa Queen, bettered Chaka's ways and did to the Bechuanas what Chaka had done to the Zulus. Her armies destroyed tribe after tribe till there was nothing left to destroy. "Also until there was nothing left for them to eat . . . they ate one another".[15]

The power of the Mantati, as Mantatisi's people were called, was broken when they fell upon Griquas—the wards of Moffatt the missionary, father-in-law of the famous explorer, Dr Livingstone. The Mantati numbered 15,000; but though only 150, the Griquas had guns. The Mantati were mown down by the Griqua bullets.

Moselikatze built his kraal in the Transvaal, where the present Pretoria stands. Driven away from there by Andries Pretorius, one of the leaders of the Voortrekkers, he went further north, defeated the Mashona and other tribes and finally established himself in the land that came to be called Matabeleland with its capital at Bulawayo (The Place of Skulls), which Rhodes then took away from his son Lobengula, and named it Rhodesia.

Today the children of Chaka and Moselikatze who ate up entire tribes, wiped their spears in the blood of more than a million people, and spread famine and desolation over whole regions in the Transvaal and Natal, in their lust for blood and glory—"all the black people who were friends or enemies to each other", are, in Sarah Gertrude Millin's words, to be seen as "the charges, the servants, the dependants, the victims, the problems, the danger, of the white men".[16] Death defy-

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ing warriors with a dignity and nobility of their own, they were consumed in the flames of their own ferocity, fanned by tribalism. Chaka had murdered his father, two rival half-brothers and, finally, Dingiswayo. He was himself murdered by his half-brother Dingaan and Dingaan by his half-brother Panda, helped by the Boers. Clu-Clu killed Panda just as Panda had killed Dingaan. The Zulus were constantly escaping from their nation because "son feared father, or brother brother, or lesser chief greater chief".[17] Moselikatze, having destroyed his enemies, murdered his royal sons. His successor, Lobengula, "continued the process of eating up enemies and murdering friends",[18] till the power of the Zulus in that part of the Dark Continent was sapped and the land, depleted of its population, presented an inviting vacuum into which the white man just stepped in.

5

The Voortrekkers' was a long and hazardous undertaking. They had a difficult and wild country to penetrate, and rivers and mountains to cross. They covered on the average six miles a day, except on Sundays when they did not travel, "though they were not always sure which day of the week it was".[19] Often there were encounters with wild beasts and indigenous tribes. Before the Great Trek was over six thousand lions had been killed, out of which more than two hundred fell by the hands of Paul Kruger.[20] The Africans were fierce warriors. But their assegais with a range of 50 yards only were no match for the Boer firearms which could kill at twice that distance.

Across the Orange River, and over the Drakensburg they trekked till they came to Natal. In Zululand Chaka's half-brother—Dingaan, "The Vulture", "The Eater of Other Birds", ruled. Pieter Retief, met Dingaan, who promised to give them land, where they could settle, if the trekkers restored to him the cattle they had stolen. Retief denied the charge but produced the cattle which, he suggested, a neighbouring chief had taken away and went to Dingaan's kraal to claim his land. In the meantime his Voortrekkers had moved into Natal without waiting for Dingaan's permission. Dingaan, frightened by the sight of the thousands of Boers who had "invaded" his land with their "walking houses" (ox wagons), "hornless cattle" (horses) and "shooting sticks" (fire arms), gave order to his men to "kill the wizards". Retief and his men were set upon and killed and 500 of the Boers—men, women and children—slaughtered. Eleven months later the Boers under a new leader, Andries Pretorius, who brought with him a piece of cannon, again fought the Zulus and defeated them in the Battle of the Blood River, slaughtering 3,000 of them with only two Boers wounded.

The English were already settled in Natal since 1824, on the invitation of Chaka, who had been successfully treated by one of them, and

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in gratitude had begged England, but in vain, to annex that part of his territory. They suggested to the Boers to establish a colony with them. But the Boers felt they were numerous enough to set up a colony by themselves, and established a republic of their own with its capital at Pietermaritzburg—the town named after the two Voortrekker leaders—Pieter Retief and Maritz.

The Boers had hoped that after they had left British protection, the British Government would leave them alone. In the Natal Republic at last they would be able to follow their way of life unmolested. But their hope proved to be short-lived. When they made fugitives of the frontier tribes and brought with them the children of the Zulus, whom they had killed in battle, to be "apprenticed", the British interfered and refused to recognise the independence which the Boers claimed. The Cape of Good Hope Punishment Act of 1838, on the principle "once a British subject always a British subject", declared that however far the immigrants might trek they would still remain British subjects. The Queen could not acknowledge the independence of her own subjects. In 1845, backed by the missionaries, who claimed protection for their "native converts", and the British traders, who complained of the abuses to which they were subjected in the Boer Republic, the British annexed Natal.

The Voortrekkers again abandoned their homes, re-crossed the Orange River, settled in the present Orange Free State territory, and set up their Volksraad at Bloemfontein.

Even there the long arm of the British followed them. Though the English had not hesitated to interfere in the Voortrekkers' Republic in Natal on the ground of their highhandedness against the "native", they themselves in their dealings showed scant regard for the "natives' " rights. Towards the close of 1847 Sir Harry Smith, one time Deputy Adjutant General of the British forces in India, who for his part in the Gwalior Campaign had been made a Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath, and had won laurels at Aliwal in the first Sikh War, (1845-46) by capturing sixty-seven of the Sikh guns, was appointed the Governor of the Cape. Soon after his landing in South Africa he annexed two portions of Kaffir land, which were named Victoria East and British Kaffraria. Summoning the chiefs before him to hear him announce his terms he caused a wagon laden with gunpowder to be exploded for "effect", as he tore up and scattered to the wind old treaties that had been concluded with him, saying, "There go the treaties. D'you hear? No more treaties!"[21] In February 1848, three months after he arrived at Cape Town, taking advantage of some frontier trouble between the Voortrekkers and the "natives", he proclaimed, after defeating at Boomplaats the Dutch farmers who tried to resist British authority, British sovereignty over "all of every race,

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colour, and creed between the Orange and the Vaal and the Drakensburg mountains".[22]

A section of the Voortrekkers reconciled themselves to the change. But a large part did not. Those who were unwilling to remain in the Orange River Sovereignty under the British followed their leader Andries Pretorius across the Vaal River, determined to "trek across the Zambesi, if they were pursued across the Limpopo, and across the Equator if they were hindered at the Zambesi".[23] There on the high veldt they set up the South African Republic.

The British realised the difficulty of controlling these people who had trekked into the Transvaal from Cape Town, nearly 1,000 miles away. In weariness they gave up. Political changes at home had in the meantime brought to power the Little Englanders, who regarded colonies as unprofitable. In 1852, by the Sand River Convention they recognised the independence of the new Transvaal Republic. The Trekkers on their part undertook not to permit slavery. In 1854, the Bloemfontein Convention did the same for the Boers between the Orange River and the Vaal. The Great Trek was at last over.

In 1856 Natal became a British Crown Colony with a franchise also initially not based on colour.

Thus there were now two British provinces, Cape Colony and Natal with a non-racial franchise, while the two Dutch Republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State were based on a constitution that declared "no equality in church or state".

After the Great Trek the relations between Boer and Briton began to improve and might have improved still further but for the discovery of diamonds followed by that of gold, which altered the whole current of history in South Africa.

6

In 1867 a hunter, named O'Reilly, and a farmer, Schalk van Niekerk, found some children playing at marbles with pebbles, and one of them was a white glittering stone. When they expressed their admiration for it their mother gladly presented it to van Niekerk. The pebble was reported by a minerologist, to whom it was sent, to be a 21½ carat diamond valued at £500. Two years later Niekerk found an African witch-doctor using a stone as a charm which, to the latter's astonishment, he acquired with 500 sheep, ten oxen and a horse—all he had. This was the famous diamond "The Star of South Africa". Sold originally for £11,000, it finally fetched £25,000.

In the following years diamonds were found at Kimberley, then along the Vaal; first in dry diggings and then in deep diggings in volcanic pipes containing diamond bearing ground known as "Kimberlite or blue ground"—millions upon millions of pounds' worth of diamonds. By

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1871 diamonds worth £300,000 had been picked up from the river diggings alone.

Yet there were some experts who had declared that the two diamonds were "freaks". One of them, named Gregory, had reported that there was no diamondiferous ground in South Africa. Hence the word "gregory", in South Africa, for a blunder.

The diamond fields were situated in what is today known as Griqualand West. A Griqua chief, Waterboer, the Transvaal Republic and the Orange Free State—all the three claimed it, each party for itself. The Cape Colony made no claim but urged the British Government to annex the territory in the name of "law and order". The Orange Free State had, perhaps, the strongest claim. The Governor of the Cape was assigned the task. He persuaded Waterboer and the Transvaal Government to agree to arbitration. Lieutenant Governor Keate of Natal was to be the final umpire. He gave an award in favour of Waterboer, who had earlier asked to be taken over by the British. In 1871 the whole of Griqualand West was proclaimed British territory.

The Transvaal and the Orange Free State were furious at what to them savoured of sharp practice but could do nothing. In 1876 England, in the light of further investigations, offered to the Free State ninety thousand pounds in compensation of its claim, thereby putting itself in the wrong, and the Free State Government put itself in the wrong by accepting it. The two Boer Republics felt that England had "stolen the diamond fields from them".

The prospect of untold wealth beneath the soil just waiting to be picked up set off a great diamond rush. In the diamondiferous fields land values soared to fantastic heights. Boer farms, obtained in a large number of cases as free grants, were bought up by land-speculating companies for £6,000 to be resold four years later for £100,000.

Followed a frenzied rush for gold. In the same year in which the first diamond was found by Schalk van Niekerk, a solitary Boer prospector, Pieter Jacobus Marais picked up a lump of rock and rushed with it to the Volksraad—the Dutch people's Parliament—where he was "greeted with cries of pious horror and sworn to secrecy under pain of death".[24] For gold meant money and money to the Boer grey-beards, brought up on the words of the Ten Commandments, was the root of all evil, and the Government of the day had passed a law forbidding gold prospecting. Oom Paul Kruger, who later became President of the Transvaal Republic, had warned that "he who finds gold finds trouble". But inspite of the ban the lure of the yellow metal prevailed and the search continued. Rich deposits of gold were found in the Transvaal at Pietersburg in 1870; at Leydenburg in 1872 and in Barberton in 1882. Two years later in 1884 the main reef was discovered on the Whitwatersrand, the "Ridge of the Whitewaters" in a fever-stricken

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valley, under the shadow of the Drakensburg mountain, "infested with lions and swarming with the deadly malarial mosquito", and the greatest gold rush in history began which eclipsed even the diamond rush. Where thousands had gone to Kimberley in the diamond rush, tens of thousands flocked to the gold mines from all parts of the world. Fortune hunters representing all nationalities arrived in crowds by every boat in South African ports, from where they travelled inland by train, as far as it went, and then by whatever transport was available—by ox-wagon, by mule, by horse transport or even on foot to the gold-fields.

The severe economic recession in the years following the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861, marked by the closure of one textile mill after another in England, coupled with exhausting wars with the indigenous tribes had brought the South African Republic financially to the verge of bankruptcy. The Government was unable to pay its officials in cash and the farms were being heavily mortgaged. The President of the South African Republic was unable to float a loan of even three hundred pounds. Diamonds and gold changed all that. The two Boer Republics with their depleted treasuries became fantastically rich overnight.

The surface gold was soon exhausted. On the Whitwatersrand there was no alluvial gold. Deep shafts had to be sunk, sometimes more than two and a half miles deep, and miles upon miles of precisely calculated interconnecting tunnels and galleries constructed; millions of tons of rock had to be excavated and crushed to extract the precious metal. The best known method of extraction did not yield more than 60% of the gold. The "gold bubble" was about to burst when in 1890 the cyanide process was discovered, which gave a yield of 90%. The cyanide was a deadly poison. But the gold producers glibly declared that though the cyanide was dangerous to the skins of white man, the "natives" could handle it "without the slightest risk".[25] The introduction of the new process ushered in a technical revolution in gold extraction but it called for a high technical knowledge and skill and outlay in machinery and plant on a scale that was beyond the capacity of any individual digger or even a group of diggers. It put an end to the era of individual fortune hunters; that of mining magnates, giant combines and high finance set in. By giving a chance to the financier to join hands with the imperialist it set England on the path of "finance imperialism", called "Empire Building", which in South Africa is inextricably associated with the name of Rhodes.

7

Into the ugly shanty town of Kimberley, the heart of the diamond diggings, with its atmosphere of dust and flies, where the mercury

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showed a hundred and sixteen degrees in the sun and ninety-seven degrees in the shade and only those who had "struck it rich", could afford the luxury of a weekly bath "with soda-water at five shillings a bottle"; into this El Dorado of fortune hunters —"Bohemians of all nations", diggers, speculators, saloon-keepers, gamblers, prostitutes and pimps —wandered in the year 1871 a "silent, moody, blue-eyed, fair haired" tubercular eighteen-year-old youth, son of a Church of England clergyman, with a digger's kit, cheap editions of some classics, and a Greek lexicon, as his sole belongings. This was Cecil John Rhodes. A year after he reached Kimberley, he, then already worth £5,000 with a prospect of an ever increasing revenue, experienced an inner crisis and had his first heart attack. To a friend he wrote, "I am afraid that life on the diamond-fields has not tended to strengthen my religious principles". He was then barely nineteen.

Scientific world had just then been deeply stirred by Darwin's theory of evolution. Among the intellectuals who had used Darwinism as the basis of their popular religious and philosophical doctrines was Winwood Reade, who in his *Martyrdom of Man* had tried to construct a creed of atheism out of an oversimplified version of Darwin's observations. Rhodes fell under the spell of this book. "Darwin became his Messiah, Reade his Apostle, and *The Martyrdom of Man* his Bible".[26] Reading it resolved all his doubts and scruples.

By 1876 he had bought a claim in the Kimberley Mine. Four years later he floated the Kimberley Mining Company, and was elected to the Cape Parliament.

In between his fortune hunting adventures he went to England, where he studied at Oxford, first in 1873 for one year and again in 1876 when he stayed there for two years. In 1881 he passed out.

It was not that Oxford could teach him anything for which he really cared, but he was set upon making of himself an "English gentleman" and Oxford, he believed, would stamp him as such. At Kimberley while engaged in fortune snatching he had pored over his classics; now at Oxford, alongside of his classical studies, he negotiated contracts for his pumping plants. But he soon discovered that neither his philosophising on the "meaning of life"; nor his boasting about his great business prospects, laced with an occasional display of his diamonds, which he casually produced from his vest pocket; nor his "travellers' tales", or even his affectation of a rough and tough adventurer's cynicism, expressed in the coarsest of language to shock his hearers, produced an impression on the sophisticated smart set whose company he was trying assiduously to cultivate. The making of a gentleman, he painfully realised, needed "the same patience and regular training as that of being a student".[27] To acquire the social qualities he lacked he joined a number of high-brow clubs and societies that

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were in existence at Oxford, ending up as a duly initiated member of the Freemasons' University Lodge.

John Ruskin was the man of the hour at Oxford, preaching with a prophet's fervour his "Gospel of Labour" and the doctrine of *Unto this Last* that later Gandhiji was to make his own. By a curious paradox he also supplied the basis of British Imperialism. In his inaugural address to the students of Oxford John Ruskin said:

> There is a destiny now possible for us, the highest ever set before a nation to be accepted or refused. . . . Will you youths of England make your country again a royal throne of kings; a sceptred isle, for all the world a source of light, a centre of peace. . . . This is what England must either do, or perish; she must found colonies as fast and as far as she is able, formed of her most energetic and worthiest men; seizing every piece of fruitful waste ground she can set her foot on, and there teaching these her colonists that their chief virtue is to be fidelity to their country, and that their first aim is to be to advance the power of England by land and sea. . . .[28]

Rhodes found in this exhortation his life's mission that led him to paint the map of Africa red with the "red colour of Britain and the blood of thousands".[29] Another scientist, Sir Edwin Arnold provided to him the catching phrase "From Cape to Cairo". Edwin Arnold was also a poet, who in his *The Song Celestial*, produced the best rendering in English verse of *Bhagavat Gita*, that Gandhiji called his "spiritual reference book", his "encyclopædia of ethics". Two youngmen at the threshold of their life thus derived like different trees in a grove from the self-same soil nutrients according to the innate nature of each. One became a Nietchzean architect of nineteenth century British Imperialism, the other, its arch opponent and ultimately its transformer.

This is how out of the words of Ruskin, linked to Reade's ideas, and the scientific discoveries of Darwin, Rhodes fashioned his creed.

To begin with, as he explained to W. T. Stead, he assumed that there was "fifty per cent chance" that God the Almighty existed. If, therefore, there was a God, he asked himself, and He cared anything about what he, Cecil Rhodes, did, what would He like him to do? The answer was clear. He would "like me to do what He is doing Himself". What was He doing? Darwin had given the answer. He was perfecting the race through the process of natural selection, and as anybody could see, He was fashioning the English-speaking race "as the chosen instrument by which He will bring in a state of society based upon Justice, Liberty and Peace". He most obviously, therefore, wished Rhodes to do what he could "to give as much scope and power to that race as possible".

The conclusion was clear:

> If there be a God, I think that what He would like me to do is to paint as much of the map of Africa British red as possible, and to do what I can

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elsewhere to promote the unity and extend the influence of the English-speaking race.[30]

In a will that he drew up as a student of Oriel College, Oxford, he left in trust all his estate to Lord Carnarvon, Secretary of State for the Colonies, and to his successors in office "to and for the establishment, promotion and development of a Secret Society" like that of Ignatious Loyala,

the true aim and object whereof shall be the extension of British rule throughout the world, . . . the occupation by British settlers of the entire Continent of Africa, the Holy Land, the Valley of the Euphrates, the Islands of Cyprus and Candia, the whole of South America, the Islands of the Pacific not heretofore possessed by Great Britain, the whole of the Malay Archipelago, the seaboard of China and Japan, the ultimate recovery of the United States of America as an integral part of the British Empire, the inauguration of a system of Colonial representation in the Imperial Parliament which may tend to weld together the disjointed members of the Empire, and, finally, the foundation of so great a Power as hereafter to render wars impossible and promote the best interest of humanity.[31]

For the realisation of his dream Rhodes needed money. He could have the money if he could control the world's diamonds. There are diamonds in profusion everywhere in Africa—in the Orange Free State; in the vicinity of Pretoria, where a mine later produced "Cullinan" the largest white diamond ever known, weighing 3,025-3/4 carats (1-1/2 Lbs.); deposits in Namaqualand, "so prolific that a stone is shown under which once lay four hundred and fifty diamonds";[32] in the alluvial diggings in the Cape, in the four thousands square miles of diggings in the Transvaal, in Congo, in Angola, and in Liberia. The desert along the sea of South West Africa is said to be full of diamonds. There are diamonds in the Gold Coast, in French Equatorial Africa and in Tanganyika—not to mention other parts of the world. What gives to the diamonds their values is not their rarity but the control by De Beers who regulate the production and marketing of the World's diamonds to maintain a steady price. Rhodes was set upon controlling the world's diamonds.

In the wake of Rhodes had come two others to Kimberley like him in search of diamonds—Alfred Beit, a German Jew, and Barney Barnato likewise a Jew. All the three were at the same game.

Before long Beit and Rhodes amalgamated their interests. But Barnato stood out. Too subtle for Rhodes, he met every move of his with a matching countermove. Neither threats, nor cajolery nor even the most tempting offers of money had any effect on him. Rhodes remembered what he had learnt at Oxford—that money alone could not make a "gentleman" of one, and that admission into the confraternity

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of "gentlemen" could to some people mean more than all the world's wealth. His rival, who had come to Kimberley as an uneducated tramp, with a box of bad cigars, to make money and was known as a one-time actor, juggler, acrobat, and circus clown, who could recite the whole of Hamlet's soliloquy standing on his arms, knew he could never expect to be accepted in genteel society. Rhodes offered to "make a gentleman" of him by getting him elected to the Kimberley Club. Kimberley Club was a very exclusive club to which a Jew was rarely elected. "Incredible," comments one of Rhodes' biographers, "that a gentleman should have said it, or a man accepted it".[33] But there it was, Barnato softened. In July, 1889, Rhodes concluded a deal with Barnato by which they merged their interests, and the De Beers Consolidated Mines came into being, with Rhodes signing a cheque for five and one-third million pounds—the biggest cheque ever written. The prospectus of the company included among its objectives the use of the Company's funds in the furtherance of the British Empire.

Kimberley taught Rhodes two things by immediate example, "First of all how England went about annexing countries, and second how she justified such annexations". Soon he was himself practising both and even improving upon what he had learnt.

8

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries trade was the main incentive to exploration. Competition was keen. High profits depended on keeping out trade rivals by means of monopolies. Colonies meant political power and control of the territory concerned. Besides they provided an unlimited opportunity for spoliation, levying of tribute, and exploitation of the natural resources, skills and man-power of the subject people. Mercantile capitalism brought into being the "Old Colonial System".

The Declaration of Independence by thirteen American colonies in 1770, followed by Canada's rebellion in 1837, gave a severe set back to this conception and brought into vogue Turgot's famous dictum that "Colonies are like fruits which cling to the tree only till they ripen".[34]

During the century between 1757 and 1857 the vast treasure plundered from the East had given England a tremendous advantage in the erection of steam factories over other European countries that lacked the advantage of her new source of wealth (see pp. 35-36). As the secrets of her inventions were at first well guarded, she was almost unrivalled in the manufacture of machine-made textiles—particularly cotton cloth—iron and hardware. She could easily undersell her competitors in the overseas markets without any protective measures. Colonies lost their importance. Free access to the populous European markets

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for her surplus manufactured goods, on the other hand, became to her a prime necessity.

The altered situation demanded and gave birth to a new school of economic and political thinking. The principal tenets of this school were free trade and indifference to colonies. Greater gain, it was argued, would accrue to civilisation by free trade permitting specialisation of industry than by monopolising colonial trade by mercantilist regulation of commerce. Attempts to monopolise colonial trade led to "mere loss instead of profit"[35] (Adam Smith). The Colonies were not only unprofitable but "involved great military and naval expense, danger of foreign war and political corruption in the mother country"[36] (Bentham). From the economic point of view, therefore, Britain would profit by abandoning the Empire.[37] James Mill joined the chorus. Cobden and Bright brought to their anti-colonial crusade, a burning moral passion. Bright declared that "it would be a happy day for England when she no longer possessed a single acre of territory in Asia".[38]

They could not, as in the case of India, always carry the political opinion of the country with them (See p. 53), but the movement went on gathering momentum. In 1862 Goldwin Smith, Professor of History at Oxford, began openly to preach in the columns of the *Daily News* that British possessions overseas were "useless dependencies". The colonial empire was not only a superfluity, but a danger; it was a liability to the mother country, and could not even be regarded as an asset. His conclusion was clear: "The Colonies must go."[39]

This view prevailed till the last quarter of the nineteenth century and found expression in the anti-Imperialism of the Mid-Victorian age. It was this that had prompted England's rebuff to Chaka, when he had invited her to annex that part of his country where the British were settled and to the repeated requests of the British settlers in Natal for British protection (See p. 342). It made Gladstone into an incorrigible "Little Englander", and his Government anxious to "retire from every portion of the globe".[40] Even Disraeli, who later became an ardent Imperialist, considered that "these wretched colonies" that "will all be independent . . . in a few years" were "a millstone around our necks",[41] and as late as 1866 wrote to Lord Derby to "recall the African squadron" and to "give up the settlements on the West Coast of Africa".[42]

It was the same with other European countries. In 1868, the Prussian leader Bismarck was writing that "all the advantages claimed for the mother country are for the most part illusions". England was abandoning her colonial policy, he urged, "she finds it too costly".[43] The iron Chancellor would not hear of colonies, they (the Prussian Government) had "neither the fleet to defend them nor the bureaucracy to administer them", he was reported to have said. He even welcomed the French expansion in North Africa, as it would "compensate

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them" for the loss of Alsace-Lorrain to Prussia and supported the British expansionist programme in Egypt.

But by the time diamonds and gold were discovered in South Africa, Europe was entering upon a new phase of its history. Other nations had caught up with England in the industrial revolution and were producing manufactured goods beyond their own requirements.[44] They felt the need of finding foreign markets and sources of cheap raw material. Colonies provided not only secure markets for the surplus manufactures, and an inexhaustible source of cheap raw materials and increased opportunities for surplus population, but also a highly profitable field for the investment of surplus capital. Railways for instance, a French economist pointed out in 1866, yielded hardly a return of 2.3 per cent in France but in new countries they could earn 10 to 20 per cent. So big industrial, commercial and financing interests all joined in the demand for colonies and the era of imperial expansion began.

This was the historical sequence of the various steps in the process of Imperial expansion. First came the explorer and the missionary. They won the confidence of the African Chiefs and became the vanguard of the movement. The traders followed, bartering for ivory, guns, blankets, and beads. Then came sportsmen asking to be allowed, for the gift of a gun, to shoot an elephant, tiger, lion, leopard and deer. Later, when mineral deposits were discovered, they became agents of concession hunters. And since minerals could not be dug for without possession of the land, the right to dig led as an inevitable corollary to the right to rule. And so, as Parker Moon with fine irony observes, "Going out to preach a kingdom not of this world, missionaries found themselves very often builders of very earthly empires."[45]

Sometimes the missionaries advanced Imperialism quite unintentionally. When they were killed by "savages" it provided a pretext to the mother country for seizing the territory of the Chief concerned. But more important was the direct impetus they intentionally gave to Imperial expansion from a feeling of patriotism. But whether the Christian missionary appeared as a philanthropist at home and protector of the "native interests" abroad or as a racist upholder of the white supremacy, one thing held invariably, irrespective of the divergence of outlook as between the various orders of missionaries. Barring rare exceptions they all alike and always advanced the interests—particularly the economic interests—of the class or group on which for the time being they depended for patronage and moral support. The missionaries of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, whose parishioners were the local Boer population, the very people who employed Hottentots and fought the Africans, showed no concern for the "natives' rights"; the English missionaries with all their concern for the "rights of the natives" had no qualms when it came to annexing the "natives'" land.

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In a speech delivered before a gathering of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce Henry Martin Stanley, the American missionary, explorer and journalist, said that assuming that civilisation and Christianity would teach "the naked negroes of Congo to wear decent cotton clothes, at least on Sunday, one Sunday dress for each 'native' would mean 320,000,000 yards of Manchester cotton cloth". The remark was received with loud cheers by the audience. "In time when the natives had learned the importance of covering their nakedness on week days as well as Sundays," Stanley continued, "the amount of cloth required would amount to twenty six million pound sterling per annum." His peroration is worth quoting in full:

> There are forty millions of people beyond the gateway of the Congo, and the cotton spinners of Manchester are waiting to clothe them. Birmingham foundries are glowing with the red metal that will presently be made into iron work for them and the trinkets that shall adorn those dusky bosoms, and the ministers of Christ are zealous to bring them, the poor benighted heathen, into the Christian fold.[46]

Stanley failed to arouse England's interest in the Colonies. Nothing daunted, he turned to Belgium, and in a short time easily obtained from "illiterate native chiefs" by "threats, cajolery and intimidation," four hundred treaties conferring upon the International Association of Congo, that King Leopold of Belgium had founded, a "protectorate" over their land. By the late eighteen-nineties "the scramble for Africa" was in full swing. France, Portugal, Italy, Germany all were in the race.

England took time to be roused to the new consciousness. "Our burden is too great," complained the Grand Old Man in answer to Rhodes' pleading not to scuttle out of Uganda. "I cannot find the people to govern all our dependencies. We have too much . . . to do. . . . Apart from increasing our obligations in every part of the world what advantage do you see to the English race in the acquisition of new territory?"

Rhodes answered,

> Mr. Gladstone, Great Britain is a very small island. . . . Great Britain's position depends on her trade, and if we do not take and open up the dependencies of the world which are at present devoted to barbarism we shall shut out the world's trade.[47]

The turning point came some time between 1870 and 1880. By the late eighteen-seventies the "Little Englanders" had definitely lost the battle. The policy of withdrawing from further colonial commitments, that had characterised the third quarter of the nineteenth century, was reversed in the fourth. England also joined the scramble.

The first sign of this in South Africa was seen in 1877—the year in which Disraeli made Queen Victoria the Empress of India. In that

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year Sir Theophilus Shepstone, the Secretary of Native Affairs in Natal, acting under secret instructions of Lord Carnarvon, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, rode into Pretoria with twenty-five Civil Servants (one of whom was Rider Haggard, the novelist), and annexed the South African Republic, then verging on financial bankruptcy, without any overt opposition. He promised to the Boers free representative institutions. The promise was not kept. British administration proved harsh and unsympathetic. Gladstone, the Liberal leader, in his election speeches during his Midlothian campaign, denounced the annexation as "the free subjects of a monarchy going to coerce the free subjects of a republic to compel them to accept a citizenship which they decline and refuse", and the means by which it had been compassed as "dishonourable to the character of the country".[48] But when the Liberal Party came into power, the Grand Old Man, under the exigencies of office declared that he could not "desert the natives". The Queen could not be advised to relinquish the sovereignty over the Transvaal, he said.

The Boers revolted. On December 16, 1880, the anniversary of the Victory of the Voortrekkers over Dingaan, they again proclaimed their Republic. Kruger, Joubert and Pretorius emerged as popular leaders, and in February, 1881, after a series of reverses, the British force at Majuba Hill was utterly routed by the Boers. Unwilling to engage in a prolonged and costly military adventure, Gladstone's Government by the Pretoria Convention of February, 1881, recognised independence of the Transvaal, subject to the suzerainty of the Queen. The Suzerain Power reserved the right to march troops through the country in time of war, to control the Transvaal's foreign relations, and to appoint a Resident, who was to exercise a general supervision over "Native affairs".

The qualified independence left the Boers dissatisfied. As Kruger put it, they felt "like a man whose clothing has been taken away from him and then restored to him without his watch and purse".[49] Six months after the signing of the Convention General Joubert presented in a letter to Lobengula, Moselikatze's son, the moral of Majuba. "When an Englishman once has your property in his hand, he is like a monkey that has its hands full of pumpkin seeds—if you don't beat him to death he will never let go." On the British side the defeat at Majuba became a rankling memory. "Avenge Majuba" became the Imperialists' rallying cry.

The Triumvirate ended in 1883 with Kruger becoming President of the Republic. In the following year the terms of the Pretoria Convention were partially modified at the London Convention. The Transvaal was allowed to make treaties with the Free State, and the Africans. At the same time England secured for "all except the natives" liberty of entry, travel or residence in any part of the South African Republic,

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and freedom to carry on commerce and from any taxes not imposed on the Burghers.

The issue of suzerainty was circumvented by legal trickery. The new preamble simply stated that "the following Articles of a new Convention . . . shall . . . be substituted for the articles embodied in the Convention of 3 August, 1881". The old preamble with the suzerainty clause was not suspended by the new Convention.

By the time the London Convention was signed, competition among the rival European powers for parcelling out Africa among themselves, had reached a fever pitch. What could not immediately be grabbed was to be divided into "spheres of influence". King Leopold had transformed the Congo into a Belgian plantation, the Portuguese, based on Angola in the West and Mozambique on the East Coast, were seeking to shake hands over the Limpopo, Germany had the Reich flag flying in South West Africa (1883) and had declared Namaqualand a protectorate (1884). Four years later the country on the other side of Africa now known as Tanganyika was declared a protectorate under the Reich. In the North France, Spain and Italy had fenced out their plots.

9

These developments had their repercussion in Cape Town, Pretoria, Bloemfontein and London. A sentiment in favour of amalgamating the South African States with a view to achieving a common "Native policy" had been growing for sometime. The Transvaal Republic, the Orange Free State and the Cape Colony had all been striving for it—each in its own way. A new plan of confederation of the South African States had been drawn up by Lord Carnarvon, Secretary of State for the Colonies. But the time was not auspicious for it. The atmosphere was charged with resentments, suspicion and hostilities. The Dutch of the Free State were smarting under the loss of Griqualand; the Dutch of the Transvaal could not forget Shepstone's annexation and the betrayal by Gladstone's Government; the Dutch of the Cape felt for their northern brothers. Kruger wanted a United Africa, that was wholly Dutch, to be established after the English had been driven back into the sea. Seeing the impossibility of it, he was trying to unite the two Dutch Republics into a separate Dutch unit, independent of the English ruled Cape and Natal, with its own Government, laws, tariffs, and cutsoms, its own separate railway system and its own sea port.

The Dutchmen of the Cape had formed an Afrikander body called the Bond. It was led by W. P. Schreiner, the son of a German missionary, but the moving spirit behind it was a Dutchman, Jan Hendrick Hofmeyr, one of the makers of South Africa and sometime member of the Cape Cabinet. The Bond members wanted a united South Africa,

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and regarded Kruger's policy of isolation from the Cape as folly. The Orange Free State was jealous of its rich neighbour and was afraid of being absorbed by it. In the Transvaal many thought that Kruger had become obstinate and dictatorial and should be replaced with a younger man.

Rhodes wanted the two English speaking colonies of Natal and the Cape Colony together with the two Dutch Republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State brought together into a united white South Africa under the British flag in which the Dutch and the English working shoulder to shoulder as one nation would rule themselves, free of the political control of England or its officials. Beyond it he saw the vision of the whole of Africa from the Cape to Egypt and from the Pacific to the Atlantic Coast as one great State still under the British Empire.

Rhodes joined hands with Hofmeyr. They found much in common. Before long Hofmeyr was Rhodes' man. He backed him both inside and outside the House and brought the Bond in behind him. Both Hofmeyr and Schreiner believed in Rhodes. They felt that if he succeeded it would mean that South Africa would be ruled by the Dutch who were in the majority.

To gain the support of the Bondsmen and take with him as far as possible the two Republics Rhodes played up to the Dutch sentiment on the question of the rights of the "natives".

> I have made up my mind (he declared in the Cape Parliament) that there must be class legislation, that there must be Pass Laws, and Peace Preservation Acts, and that we have to treat natives, where they are in a state of barbarism, in a different way to ourselves. We are to be lords over them. . . . The native is to be treated as a child and denied the franchise; he is to be denied liquor also. . . . *We must adopt a system of despotism, such as works so well in India, in our relations with the barbarians of South Africa.*[50]

He adopted the motto "Equal rights for every white man South of the Zambesi", which excluded the "natives", and even indulged in double-talk about the need "to eliminate the Imperial factor", giving to the Bondsmen the impression that he was ready to repudiate the British flag and work for a South African Union under a flag of its own, whereas he only wanted freedom from what he regards as ignorant interference by the Home Government influenced by the missionaries in his expansionist plans.

This was how the political map of Africa stood at this time. At the foot of Africa lay the Cape Colony, flanked on the East coast by Natal and higher up on the other side by Portuguese East Africa. Almost opposite to East Africa on the Western coast lay Portuguese West Africa. North of the Eastern part of the Cape Colony was the Orange Free State, with Basutoland wedged in between its Southern tip and Natal.

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Above the Free State was the Transvaal. Rising from the middle of the northern boundary of the Cape Colony like a corridor stretched the land of the Bechuanas, a tract of more than a quarter million square miles, bare, sandy and waterless, leading to the land of the Matabele, the Mashonas, the Barotse and others that today constitutes Rhodesia. Next came the Congo Basin, then the Great Lakes and beyond them again a bare stretch of continent through which England must push if she were to link Cape Town with Cairo.

Bechuanaland was Rhodes' "road to the North" or, as he sometimes called it, "the Suez Canal to the interior" coveted by all its European neighbours. Kruger was threatening to incorporate the two small Boer Republics of Stellaland and Goschen that had already established themselves in it on the track of any railroad going North which did not cross the Transvaal Republic. Germans were hoping to bring the Boer Republics within their sphere of influence. It was time for Rhodes to act if he did not wish to find his road to the North blocked permanently by his rivals.

In 1885 he succeeded in getting the southern portion of Bechuanaland annexed to the Cape Colony, and a British protectorate proclaimed over the northern half. To foil Kruger who was trying to woo Lobengula, the Matabele Chief, he got Sir Hercules Robinson, the Cape Governor, to persuade Lobengula through the agency of Reverend J. S. Moffat, son of the famous missionary Robert Moffat, who had for long enjoyed the confidence of Moselikatze, to sign a document by which Lobengula undertook "not to sell, alienate or cede"[51] any part of the territory under him without the previous knowledge and sanction of the High Commissioner for South Africa.[52]

Three years later, Rhodes himself joined the horde of concession hunters and helped by Sir Sidney Shippard, Commissioner of Bechuanaland, an old Oxford friend of his, and Rev. C. D. Helm of the London Missionary Society, successor of J. S. Moffat and Lobengula's favourite missionary, whom Lobengula trusted, and who now, as the secret agent and accomplice of Rhodes on a salary of £200 a month, betrayed that trust, Rhodes obtained the Matabele Chief's signature to a document conferring on him "complete and exclusive charge over all metals and minerals, in my kingdom, principalities and dominions" (The Rudd Concession). The price to be paid, "blood money" as Lobengula later called it, was a hundred thousand cartridges and an armed "steamboat in which to disport himself upon the Zambesi".[53]

Lobengula had his misgivings. To dispel his fears, and convince him that all that "Uldozi", the Man of the Big Hole, as he called Rhodes, wanted was permission to dig another big hole in his country as he had done in Kimberley, a verbal promise was conveyed to him on Rhodes' behalf —a promise which Helm translated and explained but which was never put in the Concession agreement—that

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"they would not bring more than ten white men to work in his country, that they would not dig near any kraals and that they and their people would abide by the laws of his country and in fact be as his people".[54]

Sir Sidney Shippard, known among some African tribes as "*Marana maka*—Father of Lies", fully lived up to that reputation. To his superiors he reported that "no governmental officer or representative had anything to do with this concession and my knowledge of what took place is limited to hearsay and to the contents of the document".

But a few years later he boasted:

> From my first arrival in Mafeking in 1885 I was in correspondence with Lobengula with a view to ultimately securing his territory for England in accordance with the plan decided on between Rhodes and myself in 1878.[55]

Helm obliged his new master by endorsing the concession with the words: "I hereby certify that the accompanying document has been fully interpreted and explained by me to the Chief Lobengula and his full council of *Indunas*".[56] How Lobengula himself understood the transaction will be seen later.

Among the Africans, communal utilisation of land was the basis of tribal order; land as individual property did not exist. When the European believed that they had "bought" land, what the Africans understood was that they had given only the permission to utilise it for a specific purpose during the life time of the conceding Chief or until his councillors or tribal council, revoked the "purchase", without prejudice to their own right to use it in the normal way. They simply "could not comprehend", observes Gibbs, "the Christian idea of land becoming personal property".[57] The very idea of alienating land, which was supposed to contain the spirits of their ancestors, was to the ancestor-worshipping African blasphemy.

After Helm's departure the Matabele Chief learnt from others that by the document he had signed he had practically given away his land along with the mineral rights to the concessionaires. Calling Helm, with two other missionaries (such was his faith in the honesty of the missionaries), he placed in Helm's hands a copy of the concession that he had written and endorsed, and asked.

"Read that paper, and tell me faithfully, if I have given away any of the land of the Matabele?"

"Yes, king, you have. How can the white man dig for gold without land?"

"If gold is found anywhere in the country, can the white man occupy the land and dig for it?"

"Yes, king!"

"If the gold is in my garden can they come and dig for it?"

"Yes, king!"

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"If the gold is in my royal kraal, can they enter and dig?"

"Yes, king!"

With a reproachful look he dismissed the evangelist, saying: "Hellem, you call yourself a man of God? You are no better than a trader."[58]

Realising that he had been betrayed, he sent two of his *indunas* with a letter to the Great White Queen of England—Victoria.

Lobengula desires to know that there is a Queen. Some of the people who come into this land tell him there is a Queen, some of them tell him there is not.

Lobengula can only find out the truth by sending eyes to see whether there is a Queen.

The *Indunas* are his eyes.

Lobengula desires, if there is a Queen, to ask her to advise and help him, as he is much troubled by white men, who come into his country and ask to dig gold. They asked me for a place to dig for gold, and said they would give me certain things for the right to do so. I told them to bring what they would give, and I would show them what I would give. A document was written and presented to me for signature. I asked what it contained and was told that in it were my words and the words of those men. I put my hand to it. About three months afterwards I heard from other sources that I had given by this document the right to all the minerals in my country. . . . I have since had a meeting of my *indunas*, and they will not recognise the paper, as it contains neither my words nor the words of those who got it. . . . I write to you that you may know the truth about this thing and may not be deceived.[59]

Confronted with this letter in London, Rhodes promptly declared it to be a "forgery". In proof he argued that it had not been "witnessed by any missionary" but only bore the Matabele Chief's Great Elephant Seal. Lord Knutsford, the Colonial Secretary, accepted this flimsy objection without asking for further proof. Rival prospectors, however, raised a storm in the Parliament over the "revival of the John Company in the form of Rhodes' Chartered Company", after it had been dissolved in India. Rhodes "squared" the chief of them by persuading him to sell his concession at a high profit, and merge his Company with the Rhodes group; and bound the Irish members to discretion by subscribing £10,000 to Parnell's Party fund. But the Member for Northampton, Henry du Pre Labouchere (Labby) could not be silenced. When he began to ask inconvenient questions in the House of Commons and threatened to make further damaging disclosures in his widely circulated weekly *Truth*, the Colonial Office proceeded hurriedly to wash its hands of the whole affair by sending this message to Lobengula:

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The Queen advises Lobengula not to grant hastily concessions of land or leave to dig. . . . A king gives a stranger an ox, and not his whole herd of cattle.[60]

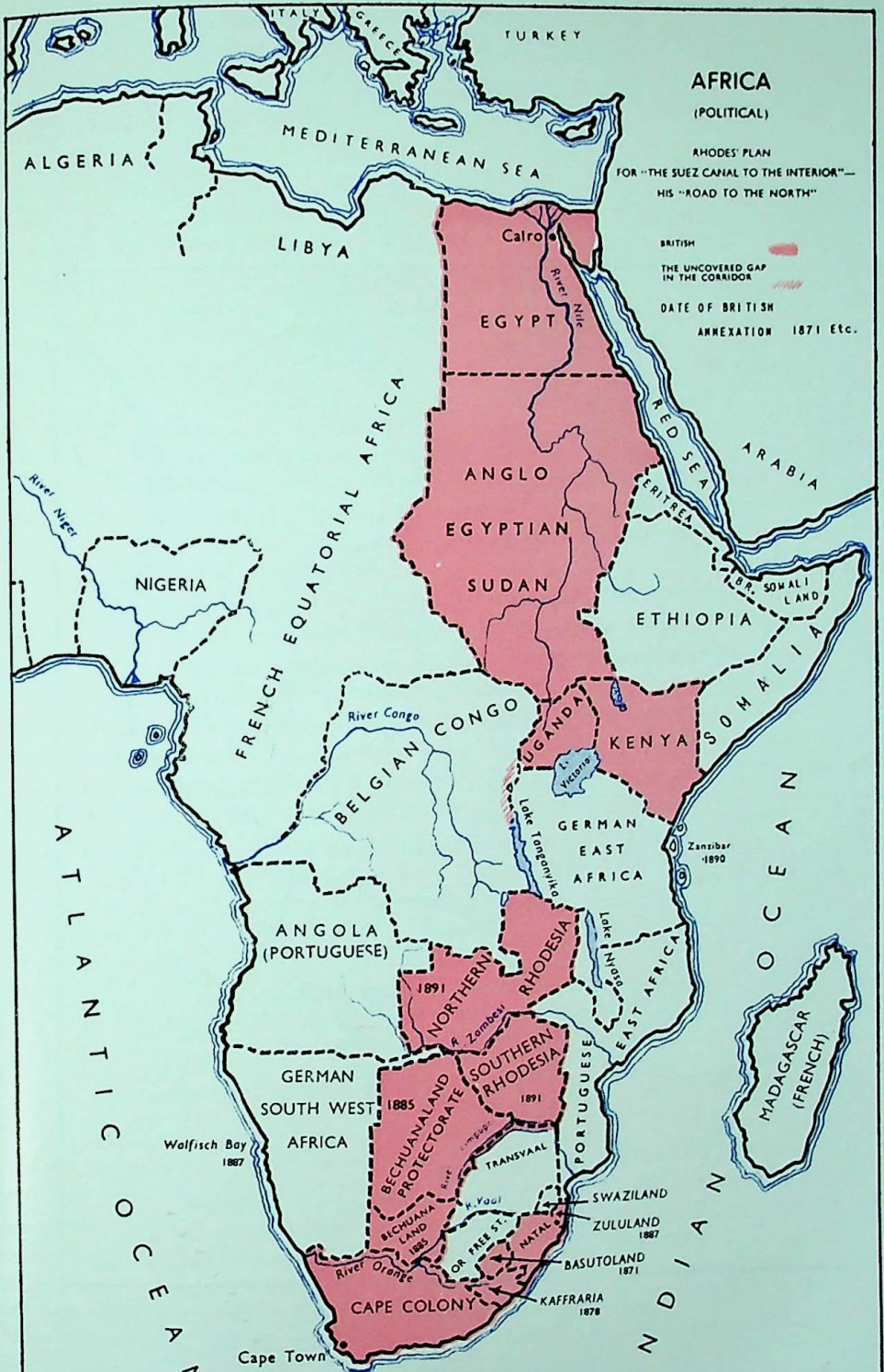
"I am thankful for the Queen's word," Lobengula wrote in return. The white people are troubling me much about gold. If the Queen hears that I have given away the whole country, it is not so. I have no one in my country who knows how to write. I do not understand where the dispute is, because I have no knowledge of writing.[61]

He took care this time to get the letter endorsed by a missionary. But Rhodes, afraid that its arrival in London before he had obtained his Charter would upset his apple-cart, got his friends in the Bechuanaland Administration to hold it up. It was despatched only four days before the Charter was to be gazetted in London. Usually it took a letter from Bulawayo seven weeks to arrive; in the present case the letter written on August 10 arrived in London only on 18th of November, 1889, 110 days after Moffat had received it. In the meantime on October 29, 1889, Rhodes had received the Royal Assent to his Charter giving the British South Africa Company for twenty-five years the right "to make treaties and laws, maintain police, construct roads, railways and harbours, develop mines and industries, (and) make grants of lands".[62]

Having obtained his Charter Rhodes was now impatient to push his railways and telegraph through and occupy Mashonaland, where a second and bigger Rand was supposed to exist. But Lobengula refused to "give the road" and to send pioneer columns under military cover, on which Sir Henry Loch, the High Commissioner, absolutely insisted, would have depleted the resources of the Chartered Company. Rhodes was in a quandary. He wanted to "do it on the cheap". A young military adventurer, however, came to his rescue, and tendered for the amount of £88,285 10s. (subsequently increased to £90,500) and with a force one tenth of what the military experts had said was necessary, to cut a 400 miles length of road, build forts and hand over Mashonaland "fit for civil government" by October 1, 1890.[63] This was Frank Johnson about whom we shall hear more in the course of our story.

Equipped with searchlights and land mines, which they occasionally exploded by remote control to overawe the superstitious Matabele, the column of one hundred and seventy nine pioneers, accompanied by three hundred police, with more in the rear, crossed the Bechuanaland on June 27, 1890, and well within the period of ninety days as guaranteed, arrived at Mt. Hampden, destined to become the future centre of the Chartered territory. Lobengula's warriors were overawed by the phenomenon of searchlights and the exploding mines. What could they do against the "white magicians" who by their

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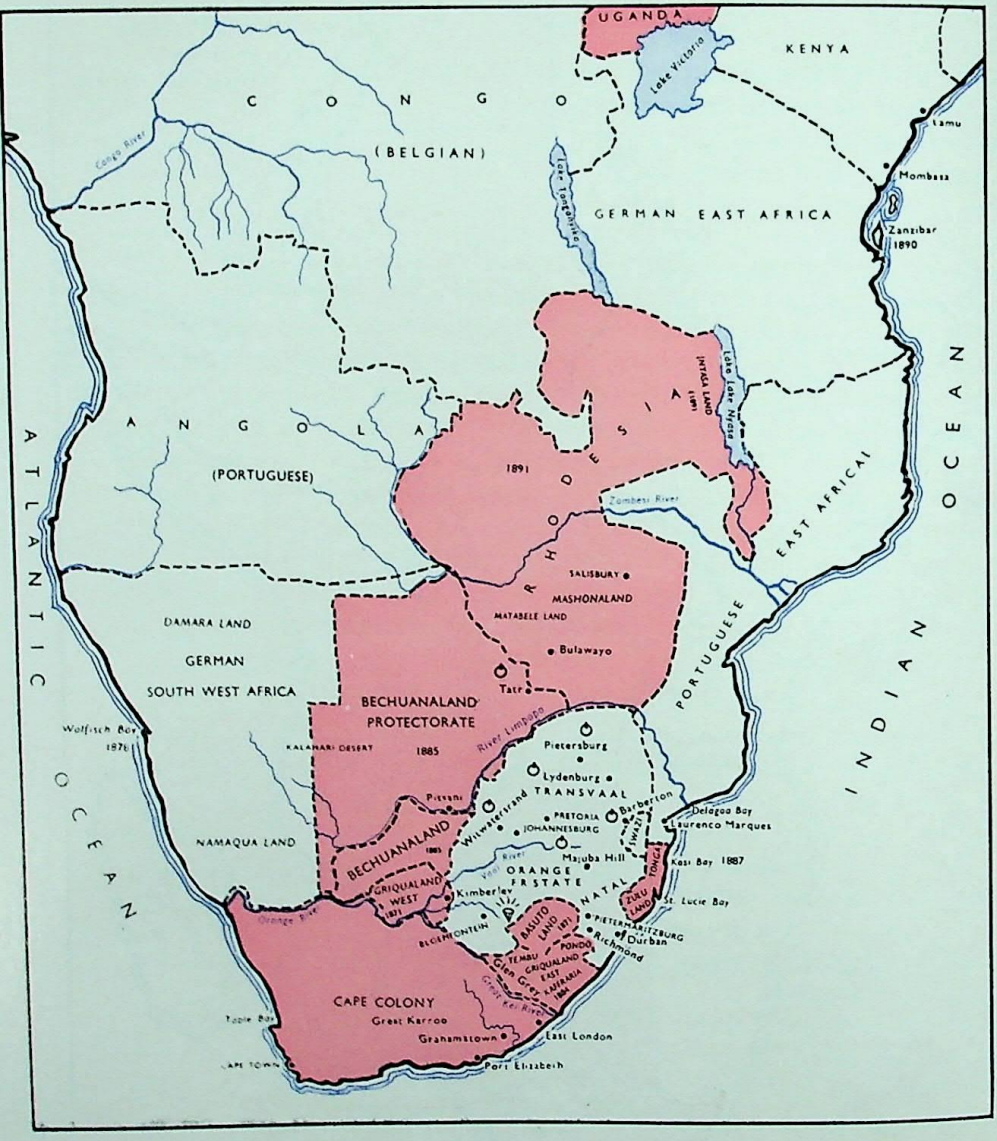


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SOUTH AFRICA

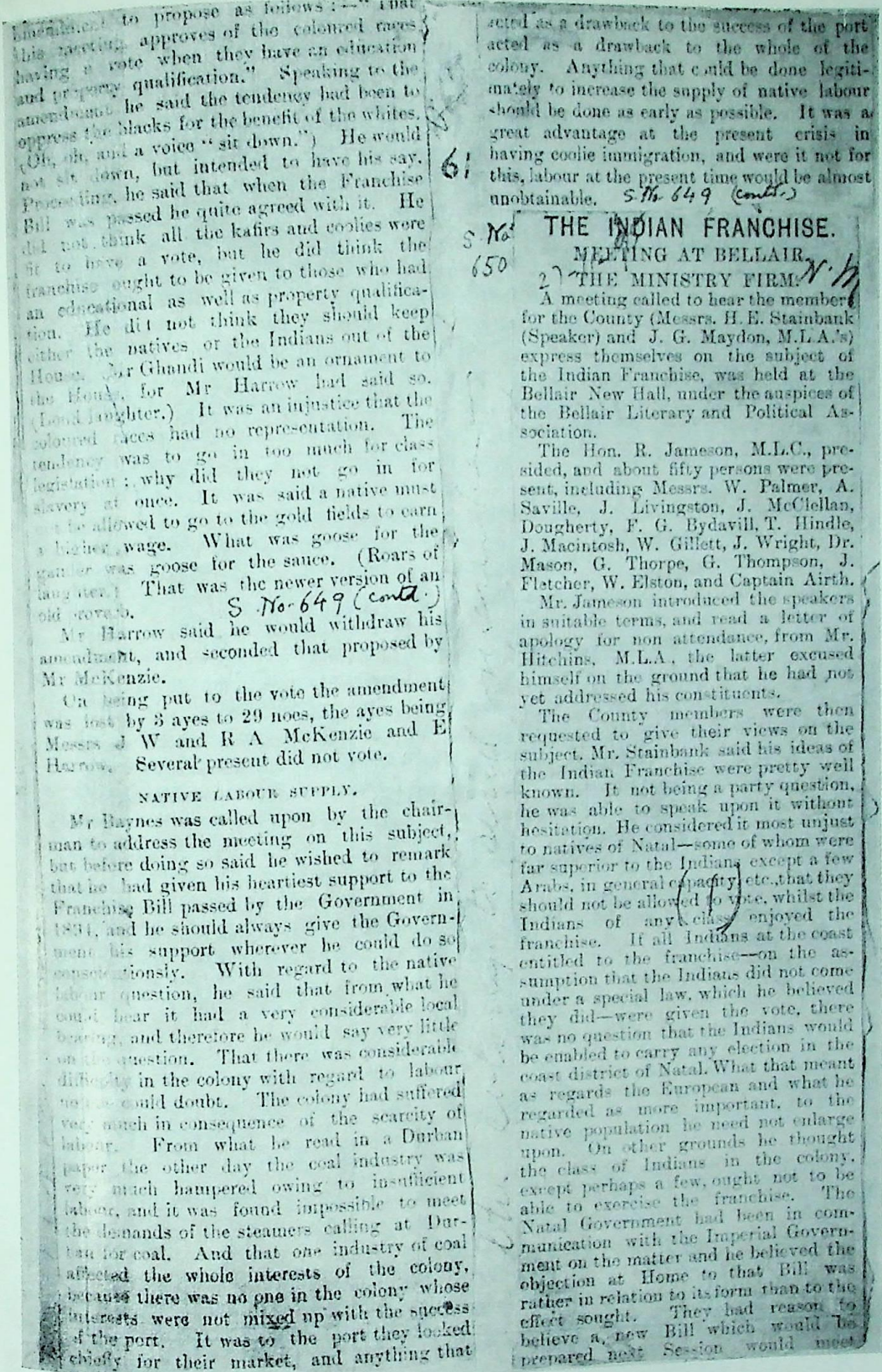
DISTRIBUTION OF AFRICAN TRIBES

DIAMOND
GOLD
TRIBES — ZULU Etc.
DATE OF BRITISH ANNEXATION — 1878 Etc.



TWO]

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to propose as follows :—" That this meeting approves of the coloured races having a vote when they have an education and property qualification." Speaking to the amendment he said the tendency had been to oppress the blacks for the benefit of the whites. (Oh, oh, and a voice "sit down.") He would not sit down, but intended to have his say. Proceeding, he said that when the Franchise Bill was passed he quite agreed with it. He did not think all the kafirs and coolies were fit to have a vote, but he did think the franchise ought to be given to those who had an educational as well as property qualification. He did not think they should keep either the natives or the Indians out of the House. Mr Ghandi would be an ornament to the House, for Mr Harrow had said so. (Loud laughter.) It was an injustice that the coloured races had no representation. The tendency was to go in too much for class legislation; why did they not go in for slavery at once. It was said a native must be allowed to go to the gold fields to earn a higher wage. What was goose for the gander was goose for the sauce. (Roars of laughter.) That was the newer version of an old proverb.

Mr Harrow said he would withdraw his amendment, and seconded that proposed by Mr McKenzie.

On being put to the vote the amendment was lost by 3 ayes to 29 noes, the ayes being Messrs J W and R A McKenzie and E Harrow. Several present did not vote.

NATIVE LABOUR SUPPLY.

Mr Haynes was called upon by the chairman to address the meeting on this subject, but before doing so said he wished to remark that he had given his heartiest support to the Franchise Bill passed by the Government in 1894, and he should always give the Government his support wherever he could do so conscientiously. With regard to the native labour question, he said that from what he could hear it had a very considerable local bearing, and therefore he would say very little on the question. That there was considerable difficulty in the colony with regard to labour no one could doubt. The colony had suffered very much in consequence of the scarcity of labour. From what he read in a Durban paper the other day the coal industry was very much hampered owing to insufficient labour, and it was found impossible to meet the demands of the steamers calling at Durban for coal. And that one industry of coal affected the whole interests of the colony, because there was no one in the colony whose interests were not mixed up with the success of the port. It was to the port they looked chiefly for their market, and anything that acted as a drawback to the success of the port acted as a drawback to the whole of the colony. Anything that could be done legitimately to increase the supply of native labour should be done as early as possible. It was a great advantage at the present crisis in having coolie immigration, and were it not for this, labour at the present time would be almost unobtainable.

S No 649 (contd.)

S No 650

THE INDIAN FRANCHISE.

MEETING AT BELLAIR.

THE MINISTRY FIRM.

A meeting called to hear the members for the County (Messrs. H. E. Stainbank (Speaker) and J. G. Maydon, M.L.A.'s) express themselves on the subject of the Indian Franchise, was held at the Bellair New Hall, under the auspices of the Bellair Literary and Political Association.

The Hon. R. Jameson, M.L.C., presided, and about fifty persons were present, including Messrs. W. Palmer, A. Saville, J. Livingston, J. McClellan, Dougherty, F. G. Bydavill, T. Hindle, J. Macintosh, W. Gillett, J. Wright, Dr. Mason, G. Thorpe, G. Thompson, J. Fletcher, W. Elston, and Captain Airth.

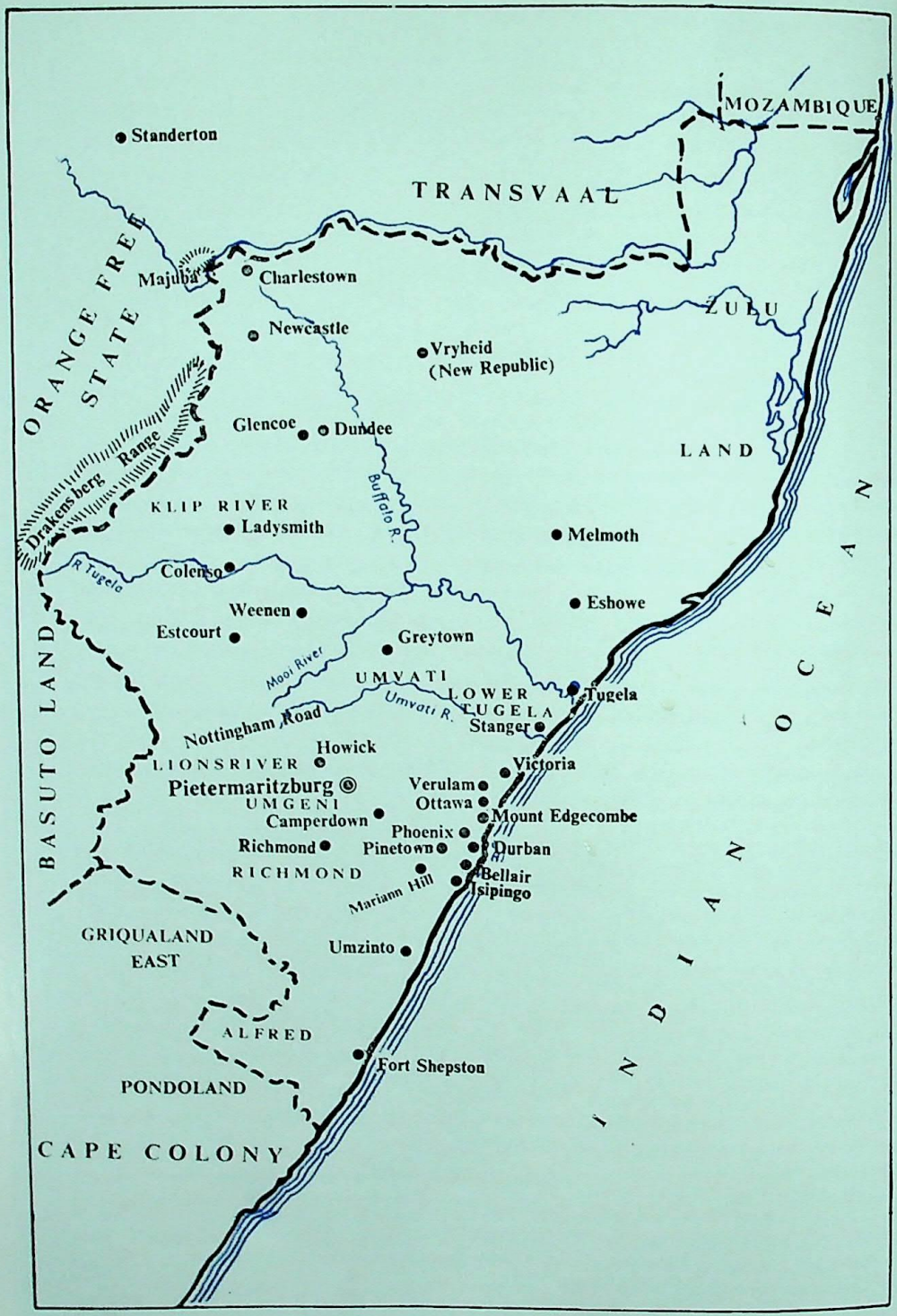
Mr. Jameson introduced the speakers in suitable terms, and read a letter of apology for non attendance, from Mr. Hitchins, M.L.A., the latter excused himself on the ground that he had not yet addressed his constituents.

The County members were then requested to give their views on the subject. Mr. Stainbank said his ideas of the Indian Franchise were pretty well known. It not being a party question, he was able to speak upon it without hesitation. He considered it most unjust to natives of Natal—some of whom were far superior to the Indians except a few Arabs, in general capacity, etc.,—that they should not be allowed to vote, whilst the Indians of any class enjoyed the franchise. If all Indians at the coast entitled to the franchise—on the assumption that the Indians did not come under a special law, which he believed they did—were given the vote, there was no question that the Indians would be enabled to carry any election in the coast district of Natal. What that meant as regards the European and what he regarded as more important, to the native population he need not enlarge upon. On other grounds he thought the class of Indians in the colony, except perhaps a few, ought not to be able to exercise the franchise. The Natal Government had been in communication with the Imperial Government on the matter and he believed the objection at Home to that Bill was rather in relation to its form than to the effect sought. They had reason to believe a new Bill which would be prepared next Session would meet

A facsimile of a page from Gandhiji's scrap book. "Mr Gandhi would be an ornament to the House" (p. 176). *Times of Natal*, dated November 27, 1895. [THREE

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NATAL



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"witch-craft" could make more than one "sun" shine in the darkness of the night "with a brilliance that hurt the eye", and produce earthquakes with lighting which left "big holes in the earth in which a whole hut could fit"? A strong fort was built and on September 11, 1890, the Union Jack was hoisted by the pioneers at a spot they named Salisbury in honour of the British Prime Minister.

Lobengula was still in authority over Matabeleland. Rhodes engineered an "incident" that provided a pretext for seizing his country. The Chartered Company complained that the Mashonas had stolen five hundred yards of the telegraph wire, and demanded that the offenders be punished. When Lobengula took punitive action against the Mashonas, he was presented with an ultimatum and troops were massed on his border. To prevent an invasion of his country he, under a promise of safe escort by the High Commissioner, sent his *indunas* to Cape Town. But as soon as they crossed the border, they were arrested "by mistake" and prevented from proceeding by Rhodes' men. Two of them were shot while "attempting to escape", the third was never seen or heard of again.[64] Troops equipped with artillery and machine-guns were despatched against Lobengula under Dr. Jameson's command. Rhodes went into hiding in the bush to prevent any message from Whitehall countermanding the invasion reaching him before Jameson was well across the border, beyond the reach of a despatch rider. On December 11, 1893, he entered Bulawayo with a column and, standing where Lobengula's kraal had once stood, in its ashes addressed "the conquerors of the Matabeleland". The last native Chief to make a stand for African independence died a fugitive, stricken with fever and small-pox, in a cave on January 24, 1894.[65]

Between the Cape Colony and Natal lay Pondoland, the last independent "native" State in that region. A few weeks later Rhodes drove into it in a "coach and eight cream-coloured horse, some machine guns and eight policemen", sent for Sigcau, its Chief, and told him that as his people were unfit to govern themselves his land would be annexed. To read him a lesson, he took him into a mealie field.

> Suddenly, at Rhodes' command, machine-guns began to spray bullets into the high maize stacks which were mown down as if a ghost was running wildly over the field, cutting them down with a sharp sickle. Looking at the frightened chief, . . . Rhodes told him: 'And that will happen to you and your tribe if you give us further trouble!'[66]

Sigcau ceded his territory.

10

After taking Lobengula's country, Rhodes sent the Chief's sons to a "native" school. He employed one of them as his valet, "to help

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wash the plates and clean my boots".[67] Trying to recall a date, he asked the boy, "What was the year in which I killed your father?" He kept Njubi, the Chief's heir, away from his kingdom, when there was trouble in the Matabeleland during the Boer War. With fifty pounds and a house—such as could be available to a "native" in Kimberley—he had him marry a Fengu girl that disqualified him from chieftainship, Fengus being the descendents of the fugitives from Chaka who had come to the Xosas crying "Fenguzila"—"We are in want"—and were in contempt given that name by the latter. They were regarded as "low caste", only a degree above the Baca, who alone among the Africans carried night soil and do so in the mines of Johannesburg even today. To the Administrator of Rhodesia Rhodes telegraphed: "Njubi was divided between lust and Empire . . . it is better that he should settle down in Kimberley and be occupied in creating a family than plotting in Bulawayo to stab you in the stomach".[68]

One of the terms under which volunteers were recruited for the campaign in Matabeleland read: "The loot shall be divided half to the British South Africa Company and the remainder to officers and men in equal shares."[69] On Lobengula's death the Company appropriated all the cattle of the country as Crown property without any attempt to investigate the rights. The Matabele were expropriated of all land, their huts were burnt down to make room for the settlers, and they were deprived of all ownership rights, till only two Matabele in the whole country, who had purchased garden plots from the Company, owned any land. The homeless Matabele masses, starving, sick and dispirited, were crammed into "locations" in the worst part of the country, devoid of fertile soil, water and game, and infested with fever. A British official later described this territory as "graveyards not homesteads". To compel those who could not be induced to slave for the white man, even by the imposition of the "hut tax", a system of compulsory labour was introduced, which was described by a British Resident later in his report to the High Commissioner, as "a labour system synonymous with slavery".[70]

Driven to desperation, in 1896 the starving Matabele revolted. "You may wipe out the Matabele. You cannot make dogs of them," an old native chief had once told Rhodes. Rhodes remembered these words, and cynically declared as the tenor of his policy: "I prefer land to niggers". His troopers had orders to kill as many of the Africans as possible and take no prisoners. After every encounter he asked his subalterns the question, "How many Natives were killed?" "Very few, Sir," answered one of them on one occasion, "the Natives threw down their arms, went on their knees and begged for mercy." "Well, you should not spare them," admonished Rhodes. "You should kill all you can, as it serves as a lesson to them."[71] Riding-crop in hand, he himself led the charge against a "Native Chief" and saw to it that all

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those trying to escape from their burning kraals were wiped out by machine gun fire.

Unable to withstand the white man's mower-guns, the Matabele retreated in good order to their mountains and forests, sending their women and children for safety to the caves in the Matopa hills. To force their men to surrender, Rhodes' men dynamited them in their hide-outs but in vain. Realising that it was beyond the Chartered Company's resources in men and money to subdue them by military means and that their grim resistance was only a measure of their desperation under intolerable oppression, Rhodes negotiated a peace with them by promising them redress for their worst grievances. The peace was kept. "The Matabele may well keep the peace," comments Sarah Gertrude Millin. "They have little else to keep". Describing a photograph of the Matabele chiefs taken after the trouble, she writes:

> The Chiefs are not shining-naked and battle-plumed . . . but bones, . . . haggard, . . . wear . . . second-hand—fifth-hand—coats, overcoats, waistcoats. . . . They look no better than the drab and dusty natives who crowd round the pass-offices in towns, waiting to be examined for their diseases, compelled to return to their hungry kraals if they cannot get work.
>
> The old chiefs on the photograph crouch on the ground. The faces of the chiefs, like their clothes, wear a discarded look. Their minds, like their clothes, are half-savage and half-civilised. The past is gone and there is no future.[72]

It has sometimes been said that what the white man did to the black in Africa was nothing compared to what the blacks did to one another; and that, in fact, the role of the white man was that of a missionary of civilisation. It would be worthwhile to know how the African himself felt about it.

When the treaty with Lobengula, that resulted in the British Protectorate being established over his kingdom, was being negotiated, the Bechuana Paramount Chief Khama (III), the last of the great black chiefs, and grandfather of Seretse Kama, whose marriage to an English girl lately created a serious political crisis in the Bamangwatu tribe, wondering whether he should not seek British protection but dreading the consequences of the impact of the white man's civilisation, unburdened himself of his misgivings in a letter to Sir Sidney Shippard thus:

> I fought Lobengula when he had his father's great warriors from Natal, and drove him back. . . . Yet I fear Lobengula less than I fear brandy. . . . I dread the white man's drink more than all the assegais of the Matabele, which kill men's bodies, and it is quickly over.[73]

The first private wagon that entered Bulawayo, we are told, like the first private wagon to enter Salisbury after colonisation of Mashonaland by Rhodes' pioneers, "brought a load of whisky and nothing else".[74]

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In presenting their Petition for the Charter the petitioners had urged among other things that "the condition of the natives inhabiting the said territories will be materially improved and their civilisation advanced". The Matabele, observes Felix Gross, had plenty of opportunity of learning what the white man meant by the advance of civilisation: "syphilis, gin, forced labour, taxes, famine, prostitution, debauchery, physical deterioration, lust for money, and fraud".[75]

One of the first things that Rhodes did as the Prime Minister of the Cape was to support in the Cape Parliament what was called the Strop Bill, giving magistrates the power to impose the lash on "native" labourers of both sexes for "even the slightest offence".[76] This was to please the Boer farmers. The Bill did not become law. Two months after the annexation of Pondoland in the month of the assignment of Lobengula's territories to the Chartered Company he introduced the Glen Grey Bill named after the district of Glen Grey—South of the Great Kei River, where it was first applied. With the natural checks of war, famine and disease, no longer in operation as before, the "natives" were increasing enormously. But the white man "preferred land to niggers". What was to be done with the growing "nigger population"? Its elimination had to be ruled out if only because the white man could not do without "native" labour. How to get rid of the "native" and yet have him that was the white man's problem.

Glen Grey Act was Rhodes' answer to the seemingly insoluble "native problem". A surveyed piece of land about six hundred acres in extent was to be parcelled out into seventy allotments, which would constitute a "Reserve" for the "natives". The allotments would be forfeited if their owners did not cultivate them. They would be inalienable and might not be divided among the children of the owner. There would be primogeniture. The younger sons would be forced to seek work. Everybody must labour for three months in the year for the white man. Those who did not work would be taxed. The tax was to serve as a "gentle stimulus" to industry, an incentive to the cultivation of "the dignity of labour". Negrophiles and other unpractical sentimentalists could please themselves by calling it "a whip" to lash unwilling slaves to work on the Europeans' farms and in the gold and diamond mines of Johannesburg and Kimberley.

In the Reserves the "natives" would learn to manage themselves, build their own bridges and roads, grow their own forests, tax themselves, educate themselves. Drink would not be allowed; it impaired the efficiency of mine labour. Europeans would not be allowed; mixture of races at different levels of evolution created problems for civilisation. No van der Kemps or Dr John Philipses could be suffered with their Hottentot Charters and all that nonsense to disturb the contented peace of the grateful natives' Reserves.

"When we need slaves we beget them," was the early Dutch settler's

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formula for the supply of labour. Overtaken by the mores of the nineteenth century, his colonial successor went one better; he did it by proxy. In the Reserves the "native" would be welcome to develop to the utmost extent his "extraordinary aptitude" for the "multiplication of children". Thus organised, the "Reserves" would constitute the white man's inexhaustible reservoir of cheap, controlled labour.

Rhodes called this Bill the Bill for Africa. If it was successful in Glen Grey it would be extended to the whole of the Dark Continent. Today in South Africa these Reserves constitute about 13% of the total land area. In other words five million Africans are to have the use of only 13% of their land; the remaining 67% of the land is to be utilised by two million Europeans.

11

In the year in which the British flag was hoisted over Salisbury, Rhodes, then turned thirty-seven, became the Prime Minister of the Cape Government (July, 1890), Hofmeyr stepping aside in his favour. For just two thousand pounds a year, he had already (June, 1890) acquired concession for the mineral and trading rights over the Barotse country, more than two hundred thousand square miles. A few months later (September 13, 1890) he obtained another for a hundred pounds a year over Manicaland. As chairman for life of De Beers and the Consolidated Goldfields, and Managing Director of the Chartered Company, he drew year in and year out a million or more. He had realised his aim of achieving power through wealth. Led on by his Cape-to-Cairo vision he now set about to impose his will on the whole of South Africa.

Luck had so far favoured him. Natal was granted self-government in 1893. The new Ministry at Pietermaritzburg supported the idea of an economic union. Her Majesty's Government had proclaimed a Protectorate over Uganda. The Transvaal had been cut off from the sea. The Congo Free State had ceded a railway strip linking Lake Tanganyika with that territory.

But then his luck ran out. France put pressure on Leopold, King of the Belgians. He cancelled the railway cession. The man who believed that with Mozambique on the east and Natal on the south he had "shut up Paul Kruger in his kraal", was informed by the Government at Home that Berlin was determined not to let him have Delagoa Bay even if Lisbon were willing (June, 1894). The All-Red route from the Cape to Cairo was thus blocked and the stranglehold on Kruger's Republic averted. The hope of finding a second and bigger Rand in Mashonaland had not materialised (September, 1894). The administration of the Chartered territories was sucking up the Chartered Company's resources and the Chartereds that had climbed to £3 10s. had become unsaleable even at

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ten bob. If only he could syphon the yellow metal from the gold-fields of Johannesburg into his Chartered Company, as he had done the diamonds of Kimberley, all would be well with him and his Chartered Company.

Like old Moses Kruger stood in the way. Rhodes tried to "square" the President of the Transvaal Republic. "We must work together," the Briton urged. "I know the Republic needs a sea-port. You must have Delagoa Bay."

"The harbour belongs to the Portuguese," Kruger countered, "they won't hand it over."

"Then we must take it."

"Can't take away other people's property," the old patriarch exploded, "God's curse rests on ill-gotten gains."

Rhodes was up against an adversary who could neither be bamboozled, nor bullied, nor bought. He had hitherto followed the method of patient diplomacy. He had hoped that Kruger might be thrown out by his own burghers, but the 1892 election had returned him to power for the third time. He lost patience. He was in a hurry. His own health was failing. His doctors had told him he could not expect to live very long. If he wanted to see his dream of a Union of South Africa under the British flag realised in his life time, he must be prepared to remove the last remaining obstacle in his way by force. He began to think in terms of a *coup de main* to overthrow the Kruger regime.

Born in 1825, Stephannus Johannes Paul Kruger was in many respects the very antithesis of Rhodes. Twice married and father of seventeen children, he was a devout Christian, who knew by heart the Old Testament which he read regularly one hour every day. He knew nothing of science; once refused to ride in a car because, he said, if the dogs barked it would rear up and throw him out; and maintained that the earth was flat. When told it was round he exclaimed, "Stop, stop! If what you say is true, I might as well throw my Bible away." He disapproved of modern progress, believed that all human knowledge was contained in the Bible and that further knowledge would lead only to disbelief.

He had strange convictions to which he clung tenaciously. He implicitly believed that the word of the Old Testament, taken literally, was enough to guide him in all matters—ultra mundane and mundane; that his people were the chosen race whom he was ordained to lead to victory, and that most other races—in particular the coloured people—were "lesser breeds without the law", precluded from the promise of a heaven after death by the accident of their birth. When a synagogue was to be built, he told a deputation of the Jews that had gone to see him that while Christians would get four stands of free land for religous purposes the Jews would get only two "because you use only half the Bible". Invited to open a Jewish synagogue, he entered the building,

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removed his hat—ignoring the rule that one's head must be covered in the House of God—and opened the synagogue saying, "I now declare this Church open in the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen!"[77]

But he had been a Voortrekker at ten, had shot his first lion at thirteen and had looked into the muzzles of the Zulu guns when he was seventeen. A superb athlete, standing six feet in his stockings, and endowed with prodigious physical strength and courage, he had once fought with bare fists a panther who was about to spring on his little sister, and grappled by the horns and overcome a wild buffalo single-handed. In an encounter with a rhino, when once his four-pounder gun had exploded in his hands and shot off his thumb, he had amputated the mangled limb himself, bathed the stump in turpentine "to burn off the veins" and thrust his arm into the freshly opened stomach of a goat, which he always maintained was the cause of its healing.

Almost devoid of learning, three months' tuition under his mother was all he had by way of education, he was gifted with an extraordinary shrewdness and common sense, about which many anecdotes are related. Once when two brothers could not agree upon the division of their farm their father left them, he decided that the younger brother should divide the farm and then let the elder have first choice. By his native sagacity and knowledge of human nature he could hold his own in argument against trained diplomats of Europe.

He loved his country with a Voortrekker's fierce, passionate love. Patrick Henry's motto "Give me Liberty, or give me Death", which translated into the Boer language and handsomely framed, hung in his parlour, was no mere slogan with him but the breath of his nostrils. Though he could, it was suspected, follow and speak English fairly fluently, proud of his mother tongue he would not admit such knowledge and insisted in all talks with visitors and in every interview on having the hated foreign tongue filtered to him into Afrikaans by an interpreter.

He hated the English, it was said, with an intensity "comparable only with that which is said to stir the devil at the sight of holy water".[78] As a Voortrekker he had been taught to hate them. Rhodes he regarded with a particular loathing as the personification of Jingoism and "the curse of South Africa".[79]

Success had made Rhodes cynical. "Philanthropy is good but philanthropy with five per cent is better" was the principle he followed. He believed with Robert Walpole that "everybody has a price", and made bribery into a fine art which he employed, with absolute impunity to himself and on the whole with success, whether the recipient was a personage of royal blood, a political party or the head of a government. "Tell me a man's ambition and I will tell you how to square him," was another favourite saying of his. He corrupted politics, opposed the ballot box *in toto*, and compelled conscience.

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These two, Rhodes and Kruger, thus faced each other "like two primeval monsters"—one ruthless, autocratic and unscrupulous, the other equally unscrupulous, rugged, brutal and dictatorial. In Kruger's eyes Rhodes was the incarnation of all the evils of capital—"lying, bribing, treacherous, bullying without conscience or moral sanction, using politics to rig the market and then using the money so foully made to debauch politics".[80] To Rhodes the President was "a dirty, uneducated old Dutchman, backward, primitive and impossible, an anachronism, a throwback to the times of Moses, who ought to be cleared away".[81]

The face of the South African Republic had changed following the discovery of diamonds and gold. Kruger had watched with growing anxiety, mistrust and alarm the influx into the Transvaal of restless, money-grabbing urban population of foreigners, who now outnumbered the slow-moving rural Boer community and threatened to smother the Republic. *Aasvogal* "dirty vultures", he called them, who were out to gorge themselves on the "dainty morsel" they had found in the Transvaal, and would leave it like a skeleton picked clean when its mineral wealth was exhausted. It was little consolation to him that the activities of these hated Uitlanders, as the Boers called them, had brought untold wealth to his bankrupt Republic, its revenue having increased from £161,596 in 1881 to £2,087,852 in 1889. Gold itself was to him "a cancer rotting the heart of the people",[82] and the foreign horde of adventurers "no more than stinking corruption", "a vital danger to the liberty of his state".[83]

"Every ounce of gold," he had once said, "taken from the bowels of our soil will yet have to be weighed up with rivers of tears, with the life-blood of thousands of our best people in the defence of that same soil from the lust of others yearning for it solely because it has the yellow metal in abundance."[84] What he saw taking place around him provided, in his eyes, ample justification for his fears. In Johannesburg the Uitlanders commanded all the wealth, owned gold, ran shops, clubs, and race courses, and were buying up valuable properties everywhere, while his Boers came there only occasionally in their covered wagons to sell their produce—chickens and eggs and faggots of wood—to rich Uitlanders, and then humbly wended their way back to their farms. He hated the very sight of the city with its get-rich-quick horde of gold-diggers, and speculators whom he once addressed in a public meeting as "You foreigners, you new-comers, yes, even you liars, thieves, and murderers!" Although it was only thirty-seven miles from the Capital, in nine years he had been able to bring himself to visit it no more than three times.[85]

He wished to get rid of the Uitlanders outright, but since they were unwilling to quit he was determined to exact a heavy price for all they were doing to his country. He heavily taxed the mines, directly or by

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the sale of concessions and monopolies. There were concessions for the supply of liquor and for the right to supply dynamite and to manufacture cyanide on which the gold mining industry depended. Corruption and graft were rampant among the officials of the Republic. He would not let a railway connection be built connecting the Rand, and the Cape or Natal till his own plan of a railway link from the coast at Delagoa Bay was completed. On its completion in December of 1894, he imposed prohibitive rates on the transport of goods to or from the Rand on the thirty miles length of railway that passed through his territory, to divert traffic from the Cape Town and Natal to his own railway system. When the Uitlanders complained about it he told them that if they did not like his laws they could go. If they stayed they would prove that his laws were not so unjust as they made out![86]

The Transvaal Constitution laid down that the country was open "for every foreigner who obeys the laws of the Republic". Kruger got the electoral rules modified so that whereas previously a foreigner had to prove only five years' residence plus a trivial property qualification, which none but the very poorest could satisfy, now no Uitlander could acquire the full vote before he was forty and that at the end of fourteen years of residence with twelve years as a naturalised subject under an oath of allegiance modelled on that of the U.S.A. which meant giving up one's own nationality. The Uitlanders protested that they were disfranchised, that they were taxed without the right of representation; that the excessive prices that they had to pay for dynamite of a poor quality due to the dynamite monopoly, was costing the companies £600,000 a year, that 75,000 voteless Uitlanders paid the remaining nine-tenths; that the Transvaalers' children had an education subsidy of £9 per head against the Uitlanders' of 2s. a head only; and that the heavy freight rates on the Transvaal railway were adding to the Uitlanders' working costs and cost of living.

The Uitlanders clamoured for political control. Kruger and his Volksraad were in no circumstances prepared to surrender it. They pointed out that the Uitlanders wanted to have it both ways—to retain their nationality while claiming a vote in the affairs of Transvaal; that they wanted their children to be taught English, not Afrikaans; and that they were draining the country of its wealth gathered by African labour. If they wanted equal citizenship rights in the Transvaal, why did they not give up their nationality and become Burghers of the Republic?

In Johannesburg a body called the National Union, consisting of middle class men and artisans, to secure equal rights and redress of grievances in an independent republic by constitutional means, had been formed in 1892 by Charles Leonard, a brilliant Attorney originally from the Cape. The mining magnates had, however, kept aloof from it for fear of spoiling their business. To press their grievances they now began to flirt with it. The Union got up and presented to Kruger a monster

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petition demanding for the Uitlanders equal rights as citizens of the State. Kruger curtly told them he would never change his policy; they could do their worst.

In their frustration the mining magnates formed a conspiracy to overthrow the Kruger regime. They set up a Reform Committee with its headquarters at Johannesburg, consisting of Charles Leonard the original Chairman of the National Union, two "Randlords"—Lionel Philips and George Farrar—John Hays Hammond, an American mining engineer, and Col. Frank Phillips, John Rhodes' brother. The Rand began to seethe with mass meetings, secret societies and rifle clubs.

Kruger added fuel to the fire by calling up some of the British residents under the Republic's Commando system to join with the Burghers to suppress a small rising that had broken out in the Transvaal. On their objecting that they could not be expected to risk their lives while they were denied the citizens' rights, which were their due, he had the five Englishmen, who had refused to fight, arrested and sent to the "front" as prisoners. The High Commissioner had to intervene to secure their release.

12

Rhodes saw in the Uitlanders' discontent his opportunity. He promised them the aid of his Chartered Police in support of the rising, took charge of the scheme and sent his friend Dr Jameson to Johannesburg to spy out the land and concert measures with and guide the Reformers. About the same age as Rhodes, Dr Leander Starr Jameson like him had come to South Africa in search of health—to get "a mouldy lobe of the lungs to be dry-cleaned by the African sun". Of an impetuous temperament he was not quite twenty-five years old when he arrived in Kimberley in 1878. He was a capable surgeon, who had successfully treated Kruger during his medical practice in Johannesburg. Goaded by a host of contradictory inclinations that lay dormant in him he took to gambling, and became an inveterate and reckless player, for whom no stake was too high. He thirsted for adventure. Rhodes attracted him. He on his part was sure that with Rhodes he would never have a dull moment in his life. Gradually he lost interest in his profession and allowed himself to become a tool in his hands. Rhodes had the better brains. He appointed him Administrator of the Chartered territories and made use of him. Dr "Jim" set about his new assignment with his usual impetuosity and sent back to Rhodes highly encouraging reports about the progress of his mission.

In January, 1895, Kruger delivered a speech to the German Club in Pretoria on the Kaiser's birthday in which he indiscreetly referred to "the understanding and mutual sympathy" that had always existed between his country and Germany. Thereupon the German Consul

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at Pretoria in a statement openly declared that his country was ready to support the Transvaal to the full "on any and every occasion that might arise"; Kruger could always count on the Germans in future. Two German cruisers lying in the Delagoa Bay added reality to the threat. The British Government reacted by promptly annexing Tongoland, including the Kosi Bay, thus closing the possibility of any foreign troops reaching the Transvaal by the sea.

In the same month Rhodes sailed for England. He was lionised, made a Privy Councillor and saw the Chartered territory named Rhodesia after him. He utilised the opportunity to make sure of the backing and support of *The Times* and the *Morning Post* and privately gained the approval of Lord Rosebery, Gladstone's Liberal Imperialist successor Prime Minister, and son-in-law of Lord Nathaniel Mayer, first Baron Rothschild, Rhodes' financier, to his idea of intervention by the Company's Police in support of an Uitlander rising, it being understood that "the Police should not move before that rising had actually begun".[87] He also managed to expedite the retirement of the uncooperative Sir Henry Loch and persuaded his friend Sir Hercules Robinson to return to the Cape as High Commissioner. Sir Hercules arrived with instructions from Lord Ripon, the Colonial Secretary, to play the part of a mediator in the Transvaal if occasion arose and the promise of up to 10,000 troops to back his intervention if mediation failed.[88]

Shortly afterwards the Rosbery Ministry fell and Lord Salisbury's came into power on July 2, 1895, Joseph Chamberlain succeeding Lord Ripon as the Colonial Secretary. On going through the records of the Colonial Office he discovered that as early as 1893 his predecessor on the recommendation of the High Commissioner had sanctioned an Uitlander uprising against the Kruger regime with the ultimate aim of bringing the Transvaal under the British flag. He further learnt from the Colonial Office files that in keeping with the tradition the Colonial Office had not scrupled to encourage adventurers like Rhodes and let them have their way in the matter of profit making etc., so long as they came handy for doing "dirty jobs", which the Government itself could not handle for reasons of foreign policy or influential public opinion at home.[89] Convinced that the Liberal Party would not dare to attack him for doing what it itself had or would have planned and sanctioned, he made up his mind to play his hand and obtain by means fair or foul control over the gold mines of the Rand for Britain so necessary for her position "as the undisputed financier of the world".

On learning about the possibility of a rising by the Uitlanders "with or without assistance from outside",[90] he asked the High Commissioner for his views on the procedure to be followed in that event. The reply he received—drafted by Sir Graham Bower, the Imperial Secretary, and edited by Rhodes, as the Prime Minister of the Cape Government, "his other master"[91]—was that with the British Government openly

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refusing support to the rising, the High Commissioner should call upon both parties to submit to his arbitration. At the same time the House of Commons should be informed that large forces were in readiness to proceed to South Africa. After making sure that Rhodes was as eager as he himself to see the Union Jack flying once more over Pretoria, he fell in with the line suggested by the High Commissioner, subject to the condition that no rising should take place without a certainty of success as "a fiasco would be most disastrous".[92] Rhodes received a message through an intermediary that while Chamberlain was not prepared to become an accessory to the conspiracy he would do all he could to help "provided he does not know officially of your plan".[93]

Throughout 1895 Dr Jameson was busy working out details of the *coup*. It was decided that 1,500 men should be raised, equipped with rifles, Maxims and some artillery. 1,500 extra rifles, three Maxims and 1,000,000 rounds of ammunition were to be smuggled into Johannesburg from Kimberley. At an agreed time the Uitlanders' Committee would present an ultimatum to the Volksraad. This would almost certainly be rejected. The Transvaalers would then rise, seize Johannesburg and Pretoria, set up a provisional government, and Dr Jameson with his men would ride in to rescue. Rhodes would be called in to mediate. The date was to be December 28 or January 4.

Arms were accordingly smuggled by the officials of De Beers into Johannesburg under the cover of night, ingeniously concealed in oil drums "from the pipes of which oil dripped realistically" and in crates labelled "German Pianos", and hidden in private houses, back gardens, and the shafts of mines. Since Jameson's troopers could not very well be marched into a friendly neighbouring State through the Cape Colony, Rhodes obtained for his Chartered Company a six to ten miles wide strip of territory north of Mafeking and Bechuanaland on the western border of the Transvaal Republic, ostensibly for his Kimberley-Mafeking railway line, but really as a "jumping off ground" for the "invasion", moved the Chartered Rhodesian police from Bulawayo to Pitsani, a little "native" place near Mafeking on the Transvaal border and began openly to recruit and drill volunteers.

In mid November tension developed all of a sudden between the United States and the British Government over a boundary dispute between British Guinea and Venezuela. Chamberlain thereupon sent word indirectly to Rhodes that the rising should take place either immediately, before the American crisis became serious, or else be postponed. At the same time he also for the first time gave an inkling to his Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, of what was afoot and cabled to Sir Hercules that troopships were on their way to Cape Town.

It soon became plain, however, that both Rhodes and Dr Jameson had misjudged the situation. The conspirators were not agreed among themselves. The "Kaffir boom" in mining shares, such as the world

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had never seen before, was at its height; gold prices were soaring; the aggregate value of the Rand shares had risen from 30 million sterling to £150 million sterling in September 1895. The businessmen cared not a fig for franchise, and were not interested in politics. All they wanted was to obtain redress for their outsanding grievances by bluff. They had no mind to play Rhodes' game of Imperialist expansion and were anxious to keep out British interference. They kept on arguing and postponing. There were wrangles over the question as to which flag was to be flown after victory—the British or the Republican. After much discussion the Republican flag was decided upon but to be "flown upside down".[94]

As the month of December advanced more committees were formed, an intelligence department was created, a code was established, wires buzzed with mysterious messages, ingeniously couched in the current stock exchange jargon, in which Dr Jameson became the "Veterinary Surgeon", or else the "Contractor", his business "railway construction" and his men "boys". Revolution was referred to as a "Directors' Meeting", a "Shareholders' Meeting", or a "Floatation", and finally as the "Polo tournament".

And then in the last week of December, one of the leaders of the conspiracy, Lionel Philips, nearly gave away the whole show by delivering an indiscreet, fighting speech which left no doubt as to its meaning. The Reformers got cold feet and decided to postpone the rising. Rhodes was informed that the "Polo tournament" had been postponed for one week owing to the "Christmas races". He passed on word to the High Commissioner that the rising had fizzled out and Sir Hercules informed Chamberlain. At the same time Rhodes sent wires to Dr Jameson, prohibiting him from crossing the border. But his messages never reached their destination. On Dr Jameson's orders the telegraph lines had been snipped.

Chamberlain, distrustful of Rhodes, whom he thought quite capable of double crossing him, sent peremptory instructions to the High Commissioner to stop the invasion and repudiate Jameson's action. Sir Hercules sent a message by special courier to Jameson to desist and issued a Proclamation commanding all British subjects to abstain from countenancing or assisting Dr Jameson in any way. The courier caught up with Dr Jameson and delivered the message but Jameson took the bit between his teeth and rode on. On December 29, he marched into the Transvaal.

Puffing at his pipe on his Pretoria *stoep*, Paul Kruger had got wind of it. He had kept a close watch on all the going-on in Johannesburg. On the eve of the raid he conceded to the Uitlanders most of their demands. Only on the question of the franchise he remained adamant, reminding them that since they outnumbered the Burghers by seven to one to concede to them the franchise would be tantamount to handing

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over the country to them. To his Burghers he meaningfully hinted that he was "perhaps more wide-awake than anyone suspected".[95] He was waiting only, he said, for "the tortoise to put out his head, and then . . . ".

With great deliberation, skill and secrecy he made his preparations to meet the invasion and then struck. The Transvaal Commandos under General Cronje lured on Jameson's troopers till they had got them into a trap, themselves keeping well out of sight in the encompassing darkness, and then opened a withering fire. When they were within sight of Doornkop, a village twelve miles from Krugersdorp and only twenty miles from Johannesburg, Dr Jameson and his men found themselves surrounded. Realising the hopelessness of their position, they surrendered. Among the documents found upon them was the undated letter of the Reformers addressed to Dr 'Jim'. It provided Kruger with the names of all the Johannesburg Reform leaders. He had them promptly rounded up and clapped into prison.

The Boers were jubilant. Their commandants favoured a drumhead court-martial and a firing party. Some recalled the Slachter's Nek incident, when a Dutch farmer and his four associates had been hanged by the British for ill-treating his African slaves, and the beam from which they had been hanged was "actually brought from a farmhouse at Cookhouse Drift at Pretoria that the leaders of the Raid "might die as the Dutchmen had died in 1816".[96] Kruger however put his foot down, issued his famous "forgive and forget" manifesto and quietly shipped Jameson and his immediate staff to England to be tried by the British Government. Judge Gregorowsky, presiding over the Transvaal High Court, sentenced four leaders of the Raid to death and others to various terms of imprisonment and fines. After much argument with his own people Kruger got the sentence commuted to one of imprisonment and a fine of £25,000 on each. Dr Jameson and his friends were duly tried in London, found guilty and sentenced to comparatively light terms of imprisonment. Jameson was sentenced to fifteen months' imprisonment but actually served for four months only, when he was released on grounds of ill-health, in less than a decade to re-emerge as Prime Minister of the Cape Government.

Kruger now cracked the whip. His treasury enriched by some quarter of a million pounds from fines realised from the ringleaders and members of the Reform Committee, he presented to Britain a bill for £677,938 3s. 3d. "for actual outlay" and £1 million "for moral and intellectual damage".[97] At the same time he demanded the immediate cancellation of the London Convention.

Rejecting the first and ignoring the other Chamberlain reminded Kruger that continuance of the dynamite monopoly was a breach of the London Convention, but had to hold a Parliamentary inquiry into the conduct of Rhodes to fix the responsibility for the Raid. Rhodes

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blackmailed Chamberlain by threatening that should Chamberlain make any attempt to cancel his Charter, proceed against him or deprive him of his title of Privy Councillor, he would make use of certain telegrams in his possession "proving beyond doubt Chamberlain's knowledge and approval of the Raid".[98] The threat was succeeded. During the inquiry nobody—neither Chamberlain, nor Lord Rosebery nor even the Radical Harcourt—dared press Rhodes too hard lest he should produce the compromising material, which would have proved that not only Chamberlain but even Lord Rosebery, the Prime Minister of the former Liberal Party, had knowledge of Rhodes' plan. The Select Committee of the House of Commons nominated to hold the inquiry, on which Chamberlain had an honoured place, never called vital witnesses, such as the High Commissioner, nor sent for the telegrams which would have proved the complicity of the Colonial Office. Rhodes in keeping with his terms with Chamberlain refused to produce them. The Committee could have called for the records of the Colonial Office or in the last resort obtained copies of telegrams from the postal authorities but it did not. It condemned the Raid, censured Rhodes and Jameson and exonerated Chamberlain.[99] In the Committee and in the House of Commons Chamberlain perjured himself. They all tried to protect one another and whitewashed Chamberlain. So ended, what Harcourt called "the most demoralising transaction in the 60 years' reign".[100] In the words of one of Rhodes' biographers, "'Chartered Libertines' had carried a victory over political morality".[101]

Popular opinion in England was incensed by a telegram from the Kaiser after the Raid congratulating Kruger on having squashed the Raid unassisted. It caused all political parties to "close the ranks". In the eyes of the Imperialists Dr "Jim" became a hero.

The Raid put an end to Rhodes' political career. He had to resign from Prime Ministership of the Cape Government and as the Managing Director of the Chartered Company. Repudiated by all his colleagues in the Bond, including Hofmeyr, Merriman and W.P. Schreiner, he joined a new party called the Progressive Party to work against the Bond, struck the word "white" from his election cry and adopted instead the motto "Equal rights for every civilised man South of the Zambesi" to woo the "Coloured vote" which he had disdainfully ignored before his fall. Time had its revenge.

Not the least among the casualties that Rhodes suffered in his Bond following—though it was scarcely noticed at that time—was a young briefless barrister from Cape Town, "lanky . . . cadaverous, hollow cheeked . . . , with short, stubbly hair, a pale face, and . . . angry eyes"[102], whose passionate sincerity, and brilliance had caught his attention and who in turn had become Rhodes' ardent supporter and admirer. His hero-worship destroyed by his hero's "treacherous duplicity" he cut him out of his life and out of his consciousness, repudiated his

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British nationality, threw in his lot with Kruger and became more hostile to the English than the staunchest of Kruger's supporters. This was Jan Christiaan Smuts, then twenty-five, destined hereafter to play an increasingly important part in South African history. With him Gandhiji was to engage in a Satyagraha struggle for eight long years, to be acclaimed by him in the end as "a great man" in whose shoes "I am not worthy to stand".[103]

For Kruger the Raid proved to be a Godsend. He rode on the crest of a wave of popularity to Presidentship of the Republic for the fourth time. The Free State entered into an offensive and defensive alliance with the Transvaal. Both sides began feverishly to prepare for a final trial of strength which became identified with the struggle for supremacy between Boer and Briton in South Africa.

The discovery of the mineral deposits in the two Republics thus sowed disaster all around. It fired the adventurer's greed and started afresh the conflict between Boer and Briton when it had largely subsided as a result of the British recognition of Boer independence after the Great Trek, and they were beginning to forgive and forget. The lure of gold and diamonds brought ruin upon many. No individual digger, it has been stated on good authority, ever amassed a fortune. At best each found just enough luck to "delude hope". Of the two diamond kings, Barnato ended his life eight years later by leaping from a steamer into the Atlantic. Rhodes, broken by the failure of his bid to incorporate the Johannesburg gold fields with his Kimberley fortune, died with all his millions gasping for a breath of God's good air which nature does not deny even to its meanest creature. All that remains of his dream of a warless world is the scholarships he founded under his sixth and last will. He had hoped to be remembered "for four thousand years". He is remembered chiefly for the seeds of the Anglo-Boer War that he sowed and his crimes against African humanity, which now, that a resurgent Africa is wide-awake it will take long to forgive and longer still to forget.

13

In olden times the Zulu was a model of discipline and good manners. Living amidst the crudest of surroundings, he manifested the highest social virtues. Complete submission to parental authority was the starting point and foundation of an African child's education and character-building. Upon the habits of respectfulness, obedience, generosity and decency were grafted the manlier virtues of love of freedom, of sense of duty and responsibility, of trust, and trustworthiness, self-reliance, and self-control. Out on the veldt the boys developed the faculty of observation. They learnt the names of grasses and medicinal uses of herbs and the meaning of the winds, clouds and mists. Absence of a

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written language led to their developing prodigious memories and the gift of eloquence. Every African, it is said, is a born orator, tribal life being particularly suited to the development of this talent. A race was thus evolved that was at once "noble of heart, dignified of bearing, with refined manner, and learned in natural science".[104]

A fierce warrior like the Pathan of the North-West Frontier, the Zulu in his kraal, contrary to the prevailing notion, is a man of mild disposition. Almost all early explorers from Livingstone downward, observes J. H. Gunther, have paid "tribute to the peaceableness of Africans, their decorousness and humility. . . . The deepest thickets in the bush are safer . . . for a law-abiding traveller than New York's Central Park at night".[105] According to the testimony of E. A. Ritter, the author of *Chaka Zulu*, in the Zulu kraal the spirit of joviality, comradeship and *espirit de corps*, "ever strong in the African nature, was at its best. While ease and freedom were enjoyed, stern discipline continuously reigned; but *it was a wholly moral force, the young men being thrown entirely on their honour, without standing regulations and without supervision; and they seldom dishonoured that trust*".[106]

Gandhiji found nothing to support the view propagated by the Christian missionaries that the Africans in olden times had not, and even then had no, religion. If morality be the essence of religion and a living faith in something beyond the immediate and the material good the basis of morality, the Africans, he maintained, are and never were lacking in the religious sense, for they believed in and worshipped "a higher power beyond human comprehension". Their tribal religion, writes Henry Gibbs, is "based on a belief in a supreme being, *Unkulunkulu*, a being known under a variety of other names".[107] They walk in the fear of that power and are dimly conscious of a life after death and of the existence within us of something that is not annihilated with the dissolution of the perishable body. They have their own strict code of behaviour and their practice is any day superior to most of the Europeans'—at least so far as veracity, honesty, fair dealing and sanctity of promises is concerned.

Truthfulness was regarded as a kingly virtue and held in very high esteem among the ancient Africans. It is related about Lobengula that when Selous (the hunter) was pushing a road through his territory for Rhodes' pioneers to occupy Mashonaland, which was a part of the Matabele Chief's territory, he sternly called him to book. On Dr Jameson trying to intercede, he indignantly asked: "Who told Selous he could build a road through my country?" Dr Jameson, reminding him of an earlier promise he had made, replied, "The king told *me* I may make the road. Did the king lie?" Touched to the quick Lobengula replied: "The king never lies", and disdainfully turned his back on Dr "Jim". The expedition was not again interrupted after that. "The enemies of Lobengula took possession of his land, and he (the king)

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stood between the pioneers and his fuming warriors. He had given his promise of the road, and he kept it."[108]

Guileless, unsophisticated and generous as only a child of nature can be, the African of olden days was capable of rising to great heights of self-control and forgiveness, when the occasion demanded it. Moselikatze, Chaka Zulu's defecting general, whose code demanded the washing of spears in the blood of enemies, being asked by Moffat the missionary, to spare the weakest of the tribes whom he had conquered, agreed "as a matter of courtesy" and kept his word. When the Chartered Company had started overrunning Matabeleland Lobengula, the champagne-loving son of Moselikatze, said to his *impis* in regard to the white men at his kraal at Bulawayo, who were trying to take his kingdom, " 'The ama-kiwa' are my guests, and you shall not touch them", and "even while his own peace mission and his own people were being murdered by Rhodes' men, and his own kraal burnt down, he safeguarded these guests".[109]

Then, there is the instance of the Basuto Chief Moshesh, who, when defeated Mantati warriors were brought before him charged with having eaten Basutos, simply said, "let them go".

"But they have eaten your own father."

"Shall I desecrate the grave of my father? Let them go."[110]

Community life in an African kraal was based on nature's own socialism, which being rooted in a living tradition had something which the new socialism of Europe has not. The latter being derived from theory is largely an intellectual affair. The primitive socialism of the African was bred in the bone. The chief was responsible for the well-being of every member. The land was held in trust for the community. There was no rivalry, or competition for the world's goods. No one wished to possess more than or outshine his fellow. "All for each and each for all" was the basis of kraal life. The title to private property, observes Felix Gross, was to an African, "as inconceivable as the idea that someone owned the sun, the rain, or the water in a well".[111] As a result no man was utterly friendless. Even today in a kraal, S. G. Millin tells us, "if a naked child of three with his round serious black eyes, and his protruding little belly, gravely performs a native dance at a white person's request and is rewarded, he will, as a matter of course, hand over his reward to some elder child, or, if it is divisible, share it. Any kraal native, young or old, will, in the leanest times, regard the food that is given him as a trust for the common good". Similarly if a "kraal native" meets the debt incurred by another member of the community, who lost his money, the question of repayment will not arise in his mind: "How can he pay me back? . . . It is my *brother*".[112] And brother may be a blood brother, a distant relation or a member of a neighbour family in the kraal.

Like possessions the liabilities of a member of the kraal also were

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jointly shared by all. The community held itself responsible not only for the security and well-being of its members but also answerable for their delinquencies. If a man in a community transgressed the law his fellow immediately reported him to his Chief. For, otherwise, the whole community would share the dereliction. But as in the case of the Indian peasant, who in the Panchayat always told the truth before his fellows but before a British law court his testimony became "fantastically unreliable", an African in a location, isolated from his community, will not tell (See page 40-41). "If a native is asked what his evidence will be in the case of a friend charged with a crime, he is quite likely to respond, 'What does, Sir (or Master) think would be best?' It will not enter his head to tell the mere truth. The court has to go on the probabilities".[113] This is just an instance of the baneful effect of the impact of white civilisation on the African.

The conflict between white and black following the Great Trek, that lost the black man his freedom and much of his land, had otherwise not introduced any fundamental change in his way of life. He continued to live his simple tribal life as before when he went to work on the farm of his Boer master. His social customs, his food, and his dress or absence of it had remained unaffected. His Boer master knew and spoke his tongue. He could take his wife and family with him to the farm and bring up his children in the good old manners and customs of the tribe. All this rapidly withered, when he went to live under industrial conditions in the congested slums of Kimberley, and Johannesburg. The mineral treks set off by the discovery of diamonds and gold turned the indigenous inhabitants of Africa into a drifting homeless mass. The tribal system received a crippling blow and with it largely vanished the tribal good manners, the dignity and discipline and other noble traits that characterised the African tribal society.

About forty per cent of the present-day Africans live in their own communities—in the Reserves. They still recognise their tribal obligations to the Chief. The other sixty per cent are town dwellers. They live among the Europeans on the land or in the towns and are partly or wholly detribalised.

Every adult male African in the Reserves has to pay a poll tax of 20s. per annum. There is also a local 'hut tax' of 10s. per annum for each wife with a maximum of £2 imposed on every occupier of land in a rural "Native Reserve". Grazing is communal. There is primogeniture. Since agriculturally these Reserves cannot be self-supporting, a large number of "natives", particularly the younger sons, are forced to seek jobs either as miners in the Whitwatersrand, or in Kimberley and other mines. "Natives" who work in the gold or diamond mines are kept in compounds, where they are fed and guarded and are thoroughly searched for possession of illicit gold or diamonds. As a part of the process of searching they are administered strong purgative

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before going home. Their wages vary from three pounds to ten pounds a month (if they have special competence) against the white miner's fifty. If a family could earn more than eleven or twelve pounds a month (on the average), the meagre food apart, in the Reserve, not many, it is said, would care to give up their ease and sunshine to go down the shafts of mines at half past three in the morning, and creep about sweating and panting in the underground tunnels and galleries all day round to fall a victim to the "miners' phthisis", a fatal disease, the incidence of which till recently used to be very high.

Even worse is the plight of those who work on the alluvial and river diggings. On the fringe of these diggings, their "shameful hovels" break out on the face of the hills "like the disease from which most of them suffer".[114] A lump of meal is all they have for food "which makes their lean bellies sick". Starved and emaciated, their legs like reeds, they sweat from dawn till dusk, at the end of the day to return to their huts in the locations where "mealie-meal, cotton blankets and syphilis are equally shared".[115] With only a sack with a hole for the head as their sole protection against cold, they may be seen going about in the winter twilight collecting sticks and cattle dung. "Remnants of the remnants", "derelicts of a vanishing world", they are the descendants of the fugitive Basutos, Bechuanas, Xosas and Zulus who had once challenged the white man's might in defence of their homelands. Quite unlike their proud, virile ancestors, they are, however, not without virtues of their own. "They are law-abiding and honest. It is surprising," observes Sarah Gertrude Millin, "almost beyond nature how seldom a native does try to help himself by illicitly selling a diamond he had found on his master's claim." Yet illicit buying of diamonds (I.D.B.) like illicit buying of gold (I.G.B.) is the most serious of crimes in South Africa, punishable with seven years' hard labour! "There was a time," she goes on to add, "when the natives, coming to the towns from their own lands, were no less law-abiding and honest. They are not today."[116]

14

Looking from a distance like a colony of wasps' nests, a typical African kraal is a collection of ten to twenty round, conical huts, made of wattle and daub and covered with a thatched roof supported by a wooden post inside. There is only a low, narrow opening for entrance —no doors, no windows. Within the hut it is dark and airless. The floor and walls are plastered with mud and cattle dung. There are no tables, chairs, or furniture of any kind. Mats made from cane strips are in general use. A buffed cylindrical piece of wood, shaped to suit the contour of the neck, serves as head-rest or pillow while sleeping—velvet smooth and so artistically carved that Gandhiji took to it while

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he was in South Africa and even brought one with him to India. The food consists of crushed mealies boiled in water, of which enormous quantities are eaten, supplemented with meat when it can be procured. The meat is eaten raw, cooked or roasted but without any spices or condiments except a little salt. Some will not touch even salt and if given spiced food will spew it out.

Before the advent of European civilisation, the Africans—both men and women—went about almost naked. No clothes were worn. To cover their shame they used sometimes animal skins, which also served as carpets, bed sheets and quilts. Today blankets have taken their place. Law requires men to cover themselves from the waist downward and the women from the chest down to the ankles, when entering a municipal area. Pieces of "regulation cloth" for this purpose, imported from Europe, are consequently much in demand. Those who have been Christianised have adopted European dress. Their women folk wear the Malay dress. The men wear coat, shirt and pants like Europeans, when they go to live in towns, where they serve as cooks, servants and clerks to the white men.

In the eyes of the modernised Africans those who have stuck to their old ways, are "uncivilised". The unchristianised, old-fashioned African, on the other hand equates, from what he sees around him, European civilisation with liquor, laxity of morals and other vices of civilisation, irreligiousness in practice and blunting of the sense of right and wrong. Often this leads to heated argument between the two. Once, at the end of a long debate between two Zulu women—one modern, christianised, the other unchristianised, old-type—a colleague of Gandhiji, who knew the Zulu tongue and had been closely following the conversation, addressed himself to one of them. "You gave it hot to the other woman," he said to her, "but do not you see that after all she is civilised while you are not. Does not that make a difference?"

"What do you mean by civilisation?" she sharply asked. "Is wearing gaudy clothes, decking yourself out like a whore, getting drunk on European liquor, deceiving people with a glib, lying tongue, leading an unclean life and then on Sunday unctuously to attend church to beguile your God civilisation? If this be civilisation then I would rather have none of it and be content to be called a 'barbarian' or whatever name you choose to give us."

Cutting in Gandhiji's coworker suggested: "Perhaps you are jealous of your more advanced sister. Look at your greasy clothes, they smell; your body stinks of castor oil. You do not know how to speak, dress or live in a cultured manner."

She flared up, "We know. But does that matter? They may look refined outwardly and boast trimmings of culture, but what about their inside? How unclean is their life? Our bodies may stink as you say,

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but inside it is clean. We walk in the fear of our Maker and we do not deceive Him."

The friend continued the argument, "Good and bad exist everywhere side by side. No one is wholly free from evil. You point to their immoral life. Do you mean to suggest that among you all are pure? Maybe there are bad people amongst you also."

"I concede that," she answered, "the only difference is that whereas amongst us perhaps ten per cent are corrupted while the other ninety per cent are untouched by corruption, in their case the reverse is the case. Fifty years ago they also were like us, they were of us, they have not ceased to be of us even now. I have no quarrel with them. My quarrel is only with what you call 'progress' or 'civilisation'."[117]

Independent testimony would seem to bear out the "unprogressive" old-style African sister's statement. "Those are not girls," writes Sarah Gertrude Millin, "for whom a young man will pay lobola that go about the towns wearing smart clothes and spectacles. Even if there is nothing wrong with their eyes, they wear spectacles: one may almost take spectacles to be a sign of depravity."[118]

Ethnically, the present day Africans may be divided into two main groups—the descendents of the Bantus, and the Half-castes and mixed breeds. Africans with mixed blood in South Africa are officially designated Coloureds, the word Coloured being used not as adjective but noun. They are the first products of the association of early white settlers with Hottentot women, with an admixture of Malay, some Bushmen and Bantu blood in them. They resent being called Hottentots by the Africans though they have Hottentot blood in them. If a coloured man lives in the Cape, he is called a Cape Coloured. Those who went north and settled along the Vaal came to be known as Griquas from the Cape Griqualand where the Hottentots once lived. But they prefer to call themselves Bastaards to emphasise their white blood.

The Coloureds of the Cape Colony have adopted European dress and manners and speak Afrikaans, but on social occasions they prefer to use English. The first Coloured, it has been said, came into existence exactly nine months after van Riebeeck's arrival in South Africa. "The day's casual and idle begettings", with the blood of the slaves on one side and that of the "careless, the selfish, the stupid and the vicious" on the other; disowned both by black and white; abandoned by their parents and despised by society, the Cape Coloureds have been described as "a race not given to rebellion . . . (an) inferior and static race . . . without the capacity for great spiritual or intellectual growth".[119] Throughout the history of South Africa, it has been stated, there has not been a single instance of a coloured man having distinguished himself in any branch of achievement. They have been held down too long to approach the white man except as his inferior. To quote the author of *The People of South Africa* once again, pride may come to the

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son of a kraal "where there are memories of strength and power and a growing knowledge of a whole continent full of his kind", but whence shall pride and hope come to a "poor, betrayed being, the blood of the careless, the selfish, the stupid, the vicious . . . born into humiliation . . . (and) unwanted . . . by the world."[120] He knows he can never hope to pass as a white man's equal and if he cannot hope he does not hope. Shunning alike the villas of the white and the kraals of the black, the mixed breed leads a self-contained life apart from all.

The South African Negroes are always typified by the Zulus, who regard themselves as the handsomest and the most intelligent of the African races, though that title is contested by Shanganas, who are very conceited about their looks and brains. Broadchested and well-proportioned with strong, well-set muscles, rounded calves and arms, Zulus—both men and women—are tall, statuesque and erect. With large thick lips that are "in perfect symmetry with the entire physique",[121] round, bright eyes, a nose flat and large, "such as becomes a large face",[122] and curled hair on the head that sets off to advantage the clear, satin-smooth, ebony-dark skin, they are magnificent specimens of humanity, and if only, as Gandhiji observed, people could get over their narrow and one-sided conception of beauty, they would not hesitate to endorse the Zulu's own judgment about his looks. He described them as "physically the most perfect type".

But though second to none in physical courage, strength and capacity for endurance, the Zulu, Gandhiji discovered, was so timid that he felt frightened out of his life even at the sight of a European child.[123] "It is," observes Sarah Gertrude Millin, "as if the darkness of his skin descends also upon his soul when it confronts the white man."[124] The other thing about the African that struck Gandhiji was his tribalism which, joined with his raw vitality and untamed passions, had been his bane. It brought home to him dimly at first but more and more clearly, as the struggle in which he was himself engaged deepened, that the answer to the challenge of brute force, could not be in terms of a matching brute force but something quite dissimilar —perhaps its opposite. In late nineteen-thirties a Negro friend from South Africa laid before him the black man's dilemma thus: The Western civilisation had come to him with the beer bottle in one hand and the matchlock in the other. The Christian missionary had tried to befriend him in his own way and delivered to him the message of the Sermon on the Mount. The African found the Sermon on the Mount nowhere in evidence in the practice of the Europeans around him either in respect of him or of one another, but the liquor habit and other vices of civilisation that had come in the missionary's wake spread like veldt-fire among the indigenous African folk and the matchlock became the means of their mutual extermination, making their last state worse than the first. The African found himself

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surrounded by strange, terrible forces of the modern world which he could not comprehend and which closed in upon him with a vice-like grip. "We are crushed down by a power that is pitiless and inexorable. . . . Nothing can avail us," Gandhiji's African visitor said to him, "we are doomed".[125] Could Gandhiji point the way to their deliverance? he asked.

Gandhiji told him that the Africans had no cause to despair. For in every being there resides an essence, whose power is infinite and which, when it is once awakened and set into motion, nothing on earth can subdue. It manifests itself when we realise our true nature or the nature of the self within. And as the means thereto Gandhiji presented to him the way of Satyagraha and its concomitant self-purification. His visitor went back with a new light in his eyes and fresh faith and courage in his heart. But in the early eighteen-nineties when Gandhiji first went to South Africa he did not know. He was groping.

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CHAPTER XVI

THE CHILDREN OF ISHMAEL

1

This was the picture of African society and this the political back drop, and these were the characters that filled the South African stage in the last quarter of the turbulent nineteenth century, when the tiny Indian community in South Africa found itself faced with a challenge that threatened its very existence. The old Africa had ended and the new Africa was beginning to take shape. Everything was in a state of flux. In the prevailing milieu of international brigandage and depreciated moral values humanity could be treated like dirt and extermination of whole races justified by such comforting theories as "progress" etc. bolstered up by a suborned science. Imperialism had attained the fervour of a religion. Leading statesmen of the day had set the fashion of perjury in pursuit of a political aim.

The original inhabitants of South Africa, Bushmen and Hottentots, had been wiped out as a separate race. The descendants of the Bantus had been reduced to a mere shadow of their former self, with the bleak prospect of a restricted life in a restricted area and the status of the white man's Caliban irrevocably decreed for them. The Cape Coloureds had lost the will to succeed along with the capacity so that the very idea of competition with the white man would have appeared to them like "a violation of nature".[1] The Griqua Bastaard, terribly proud of his white blood, reserved all the abhorrence and bitterness of his heart not for the white man "who deprived him of his heritage and sowed disaster in a clean land" but for "the reflection of the shamed, betrayed and desolate half within himself"[2]—the man with the black skin.

The white man could afford to treat the African with condescending toleration and even adopt a patronising attitude towards him. But the Indian settler became to him like a thorn in the flesh. The white man had brought the coloured population into the world and had taken possession of the "native's" land, argued the Boer, he therefore owed greater responsibility to the "natives" than to Indians. The Briton went one better. Indians were "intruders" he said. The "natives" were therefore more entitled to the white privileges than they. This was the height of ingratitude on his part besides being untrue. For it

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was the Briton who had brought Indians to Natal, when the cry had gone forth from the Colony, "Help or we perish". Indians had laid the foundation of Natal's prosperity and their coming had been hailed as "an unqualified boon to the Colony".[3] Right from the beginning the original intent of the Natal Government's policy, as J. H. Hofmeyr has pointed out, was clear. Whether under indenture or as a free man, the Indian "was to be welcomed as a permanent settler in the Colony and as a contributor to its prosperity".[4] But the white settler now wanted him as a slave—not as a free man.

This is how it came about.

Soon after the abolition of slavery within the British Empire in 1833, need for cheap, efficient "semi-servile" labour for colonial plantations began to be felt. In anticipation of the shortage of labour, consequent upon the passing of the Emancipation Act, the planters had devised a system of bonded labour that came to be known as the "indentured labour" system. But the emancipated Negro slaves refused to return to their old masters in any circumstance. The planters thereupon turned their eyes to China and India. India was a British possession. It offered special facilities to the English Colonial settlers. A new species of "colonial bondage" thus came into being and India had to bear the brunt.

The earliest recorded attempt to recruit Indian bonded labour for European plantations overseas occurred in 1830, when a French merchant, Joseph Argaud, carried some 130 Indian artisans to Bourbon.[5] But the first large demand for unskilled labour came from the sugar plantations of Mauritius and British Guinea, when the Directors of the East India Company asked Lord Auckland, the Viceroy of India, to take necessary steps for the supply of Indian labour in the British Colonies.

The Indian Emigration Act was accordingly passed in 1837 to regulate recruitment and settle the basis of contracts, transport etc. By the middle of 1837, more than twenty thousand Indian emigrants had been recruited from India for Mauritius,[6] and within a decade a steady stream of Indian emigrants started pouring into Trinidad, Jamaica, and British Guinea.

In 1849, following the British example, the French Assembly emancipated 160,000 slaves and abrogated the *Code noir*. The planters of the Antilles and Reunion approached the French Settlements in India for labour supply. Within two years there were 23,000 Indian "Coolies" in the island of Reunion, recruited mostly from the Dravadian speaking people in the South, where owing to their ancient maritime tradition no taboo on crossing the seas was observed.

The skill and industry of Indian labour brought prosperity to Mauritius, British Guinea, and the West Indies, Fiji and East Africa. "But for the Indians," stated Sir John Kirk, an eminent authority on the

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problems of East Africa and Zanzibar, "we should not be there".[7] The Uganda Railway owed its very existence to Indians. Thirteen years after the introduction of the indentured labour from India into West Indies plantations, Governor Keate in a despatch in 1858 to Sir Edward Bulwar Lytton who was then Colonial Secretary, admitted that it was to Indian labour that Trinidad was indebted for its progress. "Had it not been for this immigration," wrote a high official, "Trinidad would have been blotted out of the map as a sugar producing colony".[8] Similar official testimony can be cited about the Indian labour's contribution to the economic development and prosperity of Fiji and Mauritius also, where the success of sugar cane cultivation and the sugar industry was wholly due to the immigrants from India.

Natal was occupied by the English in 1843 but, owing to the struggle between the British, the Dutch and the Bantu for mastery, it was not until about 1850 that conditions became settled. The English settlers found that excellent tea and coffee could be grown there. And then one day a "sensation" was caused by the first production of sugar in 1852. The canes, records Sir John Robinson, were crushed by the most primitive appliances and the juice boiled in a crude way, "but the result was unquestionably—sugar—though sugar in its stickiest and most treacly form".[9] Two years later an immigrant, W. G. Holden, started a sugar-cane plantation down in the coastal belt. The cane flourished and became king in that region, and soon developed into an industry beyond the capacity of a handful of colonists from England.

The Zulu was not used to hard labour. Neither rewards nor penalties could induce him to work as a wage slave. When the proposed importation of destitute children from England also came to nothing, the British settlers, following the precedent of the sugar planters of Mauritius, where the importation of the Indian indentured coolies had worked such wonders, opened negotiations for the supply of Indian indentured labour with the Colonial Office and the East India Company, who at first refused and demanded a passage home for time-expired "coolies" and a higher wage than the preferred six shillings a month. In the end, however, the Government of India agreed to allow a few "coolies" to go as an experiment. The first batch of 150 indentured labourers from India entered the Bay of Natal on Nov. 16, 1860. How in their arrival Sir John Robinson, who later became the Premier of Natal, saw salvation for Natal has been described by him in his *A Life Time in South Africa:*

> I well remember one evening. . . watching, from a height overlooking the sea, the ship *Truro* sail up to the anchorage. Her white canvas towered over the blue sea-line, and we all regarded her as the harbinger of a new dispensation.[10]

"And so she proved to be," he adds, though it turned out to be in a

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sense wider than and different from what anyone at that time had expected. For with it was sown the seed of the Indian question and the Satyagraha struggle in South Africa.

The role of the Government of India in this transaction was that of a neutral broker between the two parties. The indentured labourers, including a statutory proportion of women, came at the expense of the Natal Government. On their arrival they were allocated to approved masters under a three-year indenture. The employer was to pay the labourer, in addition to his keep, a wage which started with ten shillings a month, for the first year, and rose to twelve shillings a month in the third. After three years the labourer was required to re-indenture for a fourth year, or two additional years if he wished. Thereafter he was free to live and work as he willed. After a further five years he had a right to either a free return passage or in lieu a grant of Crown land equivalent in value to the free passage. An officer known as the Protector of the Immigrants was appointed to look after his interests. How he discharged his duty and belied his role will be described later.

The history of Mauritius was repeated in Natal. So profitable became the sugar industry that in 1864 a public loan of £100,000 was raised to stimulate the flow of bonded labour from India. By 1865, 6,500 "coolies" were at work "helping to lay the foundation of Natal's prosperity". According to Mr Garland, a member of the Legislative Assembly of Natal, "the progress and almost the existence of the Colony hung in the balance", when the decision to introduce Indian Immigrant labour was taken. Indian Immigration brought prosperity. In the words of Mr Saunders, one of the members of the Indian Immigrants Commission,

> Prices rose, people were no longer content to grow or sell produce for a song. . . . Revenue . . . increased four-fold within a few years. Mechanics who could not get a wage and were earning 5 shillings a day, and less, found their wages more than doubled, and progress gave encouragement to everyone from the Burgh to the sea.[11]

By 1872 the export of sugar had risen to the value of £154,000. With the planters providing the bulk of the revenues, the "Garden Colony smiled overnight with the prosperity of its inhabitants".

"Had no such labour been supplied," ran an election address, "the Durban population of Europeans . . . would have been less at least by half of what it is today, and five workmen would have been required where twenty now have employment. Property in Durban generally would have remained at a value some 300 or 400 per cent below what it now obtains."[12]

The decision of the Government of India in the following year, prohibiting further emigration of indentured Indian labour, threatened Natal with ruin, workers became unemployed again. "Down went the

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revenue and wages, immigration was checked, confidence vanished and retrenchment and reductions of salaries was the main thing thought of."[13] Withdrawal of the Government of India's prohibition of Indian indentured labour in 1874 inaugurated a new era of prosperity in Natal. An Indian Emigration Trust Board was established; and the Government of Natal began to pay to the Government of India an annual subsidy of £10,000 for facilitating recruitment arrangements favourable to a steady supply of indentured labour, with the result that confidence and buoyancy returned once more to the colony. "Up again went the revenue, wages and salaries, and retrenchment was soon spoken of as a thing of the past".[14]

On the way to Natal from India is Mauritius. When news about the arrival in Natal of Indians in large numbers reached there, many Indians, who had settled there as labourers and traders, decided to follow them. The first Indian trader to open a shop in Natal was Sheth Abubaker Amod. The English in Natal, who had already as a result of the importation of Indian immigrant labour amassed vast fortunes, did not at first mind the presence of a solitary plucky Indian trader in their midst, especially as Abubaker Sheth had taken care to have an Englishman with him as a partner. He opened a branch in Pretoria also, purchased property and prospered. The story of his success drew many other Memans from his home town of Porbandar in Kathiawar and the country around, and Borahs from Surat to South Africa.

The approximate population of Natal at the time was 470,000 Zulus and 45,000 Europeans as against 46,000 Indians of whom 16,000 were indentured and 25,000 ex-indentured or free Indians. The rest were the traders and their clerks etc. numbering about 5,000. Rice was the chief food of the Indian community. Indian traders brought to bear such astuteness, tact and energy on their business that the price of rice to all consumers fell from 21s. per bag in former years to 14s. in 1884. A number of indentured labourers who had stayed on as "free Indians" also set up as petty shopkeepers. Some began to grow fruit and vegetables on the land they had purchased in lieu of the passage home, while others became hawkers and pedlars etc. As a result several new vegetables and fruits which were previously not grown became available in Natal and other kinds, which previously were available in small quantities, became abundant. The prices of fruits and vegetables fell and the English housewife who could now, along with her other groceries, get a cabbage for a shilling delivered at her doorsteps for which she had previously to pay half a crown, hailed the Indian grower and the Indian hawker of fruit and vegetables as a blessing.

Encouraged by their success in Natal some Indian traders proceeded to the two Boer Republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, where they had heard there was a good prospect of doing business

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with the Boers, and set up shops there. The Boer farmers did not think it beneath their dignity to have dealings with Indians. As there were no railways at that time, the Indian traders made large profits.

In the Cape Colony also several Indian traders set up small business and did fairly well. There were thus Indians distributed in varying numbers over all the four colonies. Absolutely free Indians numbered forty to fifty thousand while the ex-indentured Indians and their descendents known as "Free Indians" numbered about a hundred thousand. "Free Indians" were not entirely free, being required to obtain a pass if they wanted to go from one place to another. If they married, the marriage, to be recognised valid in law, had to be registered with the Protector of Indian Immigrants. Besides were there some other severe restrictions.

Indians soon found that they could do profitable business not only with fellow Indians and the whites but with Africans as well. The white shopkeeper overcharged and cheated the Africans, and insulted him if he had the temerity to object to being overcharged, or asked for proper balance on his purchase. The poor fellow had to consider himself lucky if he was not kicked also into the bargain and manhandled at the slightest provocation and sometimes even without any provocation. He was afraid of the white man. The Indian shopkeeper, on the other hand, while he was not above taking advantage of the African's ignorance and cheating him at times, treated him with courtesy. A Negro could freely walk into his shop, have a friendly chat with him and even exchange jokes. He was welcome to handle and examine the goods and make his own selection. Instead of the Negro being afraid of the Indian it was the other way about. If an Indian storekeeper cheated a Negro and was discovered he could very well expect to have a rough time of it at his irate customer's hand. The African naturally preferred to have dealings with the Indian than with the white man. As a result much of the Negro custom passed into Indian hands; and Negroes were to be found all over Africa. This aroused the jealousy of the white petty trader, who had hitherto enjoyed a monopoly. He now found in the hated "Asiatic" a rival, who by virtue of his enterprise, extraordinary skill in business, and tact, unfailing courtesy, and frugal habits successfully competed with him. Temperate, docile and law-abiding, the Indian was popular with both black and white. He became an eyesore to the white petty trader.

2

As in Natal so in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. The anti-Indian prejudice in the Transvaal began to grow even before 1880, owing principally to the great success of Abubaker Sheth in business

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that had enabled him to purchase property in one of the principal streets of Pretoria. The Transvaal was a Republic. British citizenship therefore could afford Indians little protection in the Transvaal. As the number of Indian traders grew, Burgher and Uitlander alike started an anti-Indian campaign in the press against those whom they regarded as their trade rivals, and began to inundate the Volksraad with petitions and memorials praying that Indians should be expelled and their trade stopped. One petition to the Executive against the Indians alluded to "the dangers to which the whole community is exposed by the spread of leprosy, syphilis, and the like loathsome diseases, engendered by the filthy habits and immoral practices of these people."[15] Another memorial stated that "as these men enter the (Orange Free) State without wives or female relatives the result is obvious. Their religion teaches them to consider all women as soulless and Christians as natural prey."[16]

When Indians came to know of what was afoot they went to see President Kruger. He without even admitting them to his house, made them wait in his courtyard and after hearing them for a while said:

> You are the descendants of Ishmael and therefore from your very birth bound to slave for the descendants of Esau. As the descendants of Esau we cannot admit you to rights placing you on an equality with ourselves. You must rest content with what rights we grant to you.[17]

According to Article 26 of the Pretoria Convention of 1881, and Article 14 of the London Convention of 1884, it will be remembered, the British Government had secured the right of "all persons other than natives conforming themselves to the laws of the Transvaal State, . . . liberty with their families to enter, move or reside in any part of the Republic; . . . to hire or possess houses, manufactories, warehouses, shops and premises;. . . to carry on their commerce either in person or by any agents whom they might think fit to employ; and . . . freedom from any taxes whether general or local not imposed upon Transvaal citizens in respect of their persons, and property, commerce or industry".[18]

As far back as January 6, 1885, the Transvaal Government wrote to Lord Derby, the Secretary of State for the Colonies to say that it was proposed to legislate for the "regulation of the Orientals" who had settled, nearly all, as store-keepers—in the Republic and inquiring whether the South African Republic was at liberty to do so under Article XIV of the London Convention of 1884. In forwarding the State Secretary Dr Leyds' letter to Lord Derby, Sir Hercules Robinson, the High Commissioner, who was the Governor of the Cape at the time of the London Convention, after consultation with Sir Henry De Villiers, Chief Justice of the Cape Colony, as to the exact meaning and intent of the phrase in the Convention "All persons other than the natives", wrote that there was no doubt whatever as to what was

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understood by all parties to the Pretoria Convention in regard to the meaning of the word,[19] and Sir Henry De Villiers had given it as his opinion that Arabs, Indians, Chinese, and other Asiatics could not be regarded as natives, but must be looked upon as "persons other than natives". But weak and vacillating—a trait that later forced Chamberlain to replace him by Milner—he went on gratuitously to add that the effect of this view, if accepted, would be "to extend the same protection to persons of every nationality throughout the world who might settle in the Transvaal, the coloured population of South Africa alone excepted". And since, in his view, "it was doubtless not the intention of Lord Kimberley to prohibit the Transvaal Government from the regulation of the Indian. . .immigrants", he suggested that the Government of South Africa should be informed that "Her Majesty's Government will be willing to amend Article XIV of the Convention by inserting the words AFRICAN NATIVES OR INDIAN OR CHINESE COOLIE IMMIGRANTS."[20] The Article would then read

> All persons other than African natives or Indian or Chinese coolie immigrants conforming themselves to the laws of the South African Republic will have full liberty with their families to enter, travel or inhabit, etc.

Lord Derby concurred but thought it preferable that the South African Republic should legislate in the proposed sense, "having received an assurance that Her Majesty's Government will not desire to insist upon any such construction of the terms of the Convention as would interfere with reasonable legislation in the desired direction."[21]

The Transvaal Government was not satisfied with this as it would still have left the "Arab" traders already carrying on business in the towns of the State all the rights conferred upon them by the Convention, and would have given freedom to the South African Republic to legislate only for "Asiatic coolie Immigrants" i.e. Labourers—not persons of superior rank. Instead of sanctioning the amendment proposed by Lord Derby it passed bye-law No. 3 of 1885, providing that *none of the coloured aliens could* obtain the franchise; or *be owners of fixed property* (Italics mine). Those who settled in the Republic for the purpose of trading etc. must be registered on separate lists held by the *Landdrosts* of different districts according to the form prescribed by the Government within 8 days after arrival, and pay registration fee of £25. In the case of contravention of this law a fine of £10 to £100 was to be imposed failing payment of which one to six months' imprisonment would be given. The Government reserved to itself the right to point out to them streets, wards, and locations for habitation. Registration would be free to all those coloured aliens who were settled in Natal before the law came into force.[22]

In the following year this law was amended by a resolution of the Executive of the South African Republic as a result of correspondence

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between the British Government and the Transvaal Republic, the same being confirmed by Proclamation of January 26, 1887. The registration fee was reduced from £25 to £3, the words "for sanitary purposes" being inserted in the clause empowering the Government to point out to the Asiatics their proper streets, wards, and locations for residence; the clause, which completely debarred Indians from holding landed property, was removed and a further clause was added empowering Asiatics to hold fixed (landed) property in such streets, wards and locations *so appointed for "sanitary purposes"* (Italics mine).

This removed the scruples of the British Government but the amendments were not favourably received by the Transvaal whites. Matters came to a head when in 1888 the *Landdrost* of Middleburg refused to give Messrs Ismail Suleman and Co., a licence to trade on a certain *erf* (site) situate in the town, although the applicant had tendered the ordinary licence money, but he indicated the places where they might trade in accordance with the terms of the Bye-law 3 of 1885. Suleman and Co. refused to accept this compromise and instituted an action to compel the *Landdrost* in question to give them the licence they had asked for. The Chief Justice of the Transvaal Supreme Court after hearing the arguments decided against the plaintiff, on the ground that Law No. 3 of 1885 was too explicit to admit of any other decision, and that he could not distinguish between places in which business could be carried on and habitation.

A little later (January 4, 1890), the High Commissioner drew the attention of the Transvaal Government to the distinction drawn by Lord Knutsford, the Secretary of State, between "dwelling" and "dealing", in the amended Bye-law. The British Government contended that the law in question being a "sanitary measure" could not apply to traders and other persons of superior mode of life, and it was only in that sense that they had accepted it and "not insisted upon the fact that it was in contravention of the terms of Article XIV of the London Convention". The Transvaal Government, however, maintained that the Law should apply to all Asiatic alike, and further, interpreted the phrase "for residence" to include "business premises" as well. They had the right, therefore, they claimed, to compel all "Asiatics not merely to reside, but also to carry on their business exclusively in the streets or locations especially assigned to them."[23]

Dr Leyds, the State Secretary of the Transvaal, in his reply, pointed out to the High Commissioner that the dictum of the Chief Justice in the judgement of the Transvaal Supreme Court in the Suleman Ismael case, must be respected. The Law of 1885 as amended in 1886 was, he maintained, "fair, and reasonable and worthy of British Government's approval", inasmuch as it assured the "coloured Uitlanders more rights than were recommended by Sir Hercules Robinson and approved of by Lord Derby in 1885".[24] Subsequently Kruger in his

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telegram dated January 4, 1890, contended that the places of residence marked off for Indian merchants under Bye-law 3 of 1885 were contiguous to towns on the high roads, "so that they would not be debarred from carrying on business". The British Government adhered to its view and pressed the Government of the South African Republic at any rate to respect the interest of the British Indian traders who had acquired a vested right, prior to the legislation of 1885, to trade outside locations. But no agreement could be reached on the subject. The Transvaal Government issued an order for their removal but took no action to enforce it. Its hands were more than full with the Uitlander issue and it was disinclined to commit any act that might be interpreted as a breach of the Convention and precipitate a conflict. Indians continued to carry on their business in the towns.

In the Orange Free State Indians fared worse. With an area of 72,000 square miles it had a total population of 207,503 of which the Europeans numbered only 77,716, the coloured population being 129,787. There were three Indian stores in the Republic in 1890 with liquidated assets of over £9,000, being among the wealthiest of Indian firms. They were closed without any compensation and their owners served with a year's notice to clear out. As the Orange Free State was an independent Dutch Republic over which Queen had no suzerain power, for Indians to invoke their British citizenship rights was only to invite ridicule. Representations made to the British Government proved of no avail. This left only a few Indians there who were employed as waiters, general servants etc.

Under a law entitled "the law to prevent inrush of Asiatic Coloured persons" no Indian could remain in the Orange Free State for more than 2 months, unless he got the permission from the President of the Republic, who could not consider the application to reside before thirty days had elapsed after the presentation of the application and other formalities had been gone through. He had the further right to grant or not to grant the permission asked for, "according to the state of things". On no account, however, could the applicant hold fixed property or carry on any mercantile or farming business in the State. On top of it, every Indian resident was subject to an annual poll-tax of £10. The first contravention of the section interdicting mercantile or farming business rendered the delinquent liable to a fine of £25 or three months' imprisonment, with or without hard labour. For all subsequent contraventions, the penalty was to be each time doubled.

3

The Boer attitude in regard to the Indians in the two Dutch Republics in its turn set the pace for the Briton in Natal. The two

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acted and reacted on each other. The first straw indicative of the direction in which the wind was blowing was the appointment of a labour commission in 1885 by the Natal Government to investigate the position created by Indian immigration. It revealed a preponderance of European opinion in the Colony against the presence of free Indian labour "as a rival or competitor, either in agriculture or commercial pursuits".[25] But the white planter of sugar and tea who supplied the bulk of the revenue was all powerful in the Natal Assembly. He was determined that immigration should continue. His voice for the time being prevailed. The Government gave in.[26]

But while all attempts to get the system declared illegal failed, owing to the vehement opposition of the sugar planters, the Government could not ignore the outcry of the European petty trader class against the presence of free Indians. To check the growth of Indian settlement accordingly in 1891 an Act was passed prohibiting the acquisition of land by ex-indentured labourers.[27] They were also subjected to several other harassing restrictions. We shall come to them later.

Natalians were not satisfied with the Act of 1891. But Natal Government was as yet a Crown Colony; Colonial Office was ultimately responsible for its government; the Natalians could not have things quite their own way. For this and similar other reasons an agitation for the attainment of Responsible Government was set on foot.

Responsible Government in Natal was established on July 4, 1893. Under the 1856 Charter every adult male, not being a "native" or an alien who had not been naturalised, above the age of twenty years who possessed immovable property of £50 or rented property of £10 was entitled to vote, provided that he had not been convicted of any infamous crime or offence without having received a full pardon. A number of Indian settlers possessed the necessary qualification for the franchise, but they had been unaware of it, and had never got their names put on the voters' list. But about the year 1882 some political rivalry arose between two Europeans—Harry Escombe, the distinguished attorney of the Natal Bar and the Wharf Engineer of Durban. Afraid lest the Engineer, who was an influential man, might deprive him of his votes and defeat him at the election, Escombe, who had for his clients some of the wealthiest of Indian traders in Natal, including Dada Abdulla, acquainted them of their position and at his instance they all registered themselves as voters and voted for him.

Fat was in the fire. To trade jealousy was added the political animus of the anti-Indian white. The politician joined hands with the trader to eliminate the Indian as a business rival and to prevent him from exercising his franchise right.

The general election in Natal was to be held on September 19, 1893. The voters' list for the year ending August 31, 1894, was required to be ready before July 1, 1893. At Durban county election, the field

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coronet for Ward I of the Umlazi Division of the County of Durban having prepared and forwarded a voters' list to the Resident Magistrate on June 28, 1893, found that it did not contain the names of 73 Indians who were entitled to vote. A corrected list inserting the omitted names was subsequently prepared by him and the same published in the Natal Government Gazette of July 18, 1893.

One of the candidates for election William Palmer, a political scallywag and a pedlar of his patriotism, thereupon made an application before the Supreme Court objecting to the names of the Indians being put on the voters' list. But on the Attorney-General pointing out that, if the court were to entertain the objection put forward, its effect would be to invalidate the whole list, including the European names, so that the election, that was to be held on Tuesday following, would not be held, the application was withdrawn by consent.[28]

Defeated at the election, Palmer issued a circular letter to some of the M.L.A.s of the Natal Assembly, asking for contributions towards "the legal expenses incurred in connection with the late appeal" to the Supreme Court against the admission of the "Coolie voters", amounting to £48 18s. 11d. Should the amount be over-subscribed, the appeal ran, "I propose handing any surplus to our Ladysmith friends, who are keeping up the fight". The appeal concluded, "I hope to get your cheques by the return of post". He had the unlooked for privilege of finding his letter published in the *Times of Natal* with the following comment by one of the M.L.A. recipients to whom it had been addressed:

> Can you, Mr Editor, tell us upon what principle we poor unfortunate M.L.A.s are called upon to subscribe towards Mr Palmer's luxuries. . . . Is Mr Palmer a patriot? Mr Palmer has not published the bills of costs showing how the £48 18s. 11d. is made up. . . . Are Mr Palmer's electioneering expenses included in this account? Is the whole a joke or is it pure cheek?

Flaying him for presuming to dictate as to disposal of any surplus contributions the M.L.A. concluded:

> No doubt, Mr Palmer thinks that, as he has not been a successful candidate, all those elected must possess a good deal of the asinine qualities, and are, therefore, fit subjects for his jokes or his cheek.[29]

Opponent of a different order altogether was Henry (afterwards Sir Henry) Bale, member of the Natal Legislative Assembly, who became Attorney-General and Minister of Education in Harry Escombe's Ministry in 1897. Knighted four years later, and appointed Chief Justice of the Natal Supreme Court, he ended up by becoming King's Counsel, Administrator and Commander-in-Chief in and over the Colony of the Natal, Vice Admiral of the same and Supreme Chief over

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the native population. He also was one of the white City candidates. A typical English gentleman, he was a converted Christian, who took a prominent part in religious movements. For bringing his "conscience" into play rather frequently on the floor of the Assembly House, he was nick-named "Bale the conscientious".

The third member of the anti-Indian trio was Mr Tatham, Attorney and a member of the Natal Assembly, who became leader of the Natal Labour Party near about 1906.

The Natal law authorised the appointment of interpreters at polling booths. Bale applied to the Supreme Court, objecting to the appointment of interpreters on the ground that "neither the agents, the presiding officer, nor anybody else at the polling places would understand what these interpreters said".[30] The Chief Justice, however, ruled that "the Indian was entitled to facilities if he was entitled to vote, otherwise a voter might not be able to understand questions if addressed in a tongue with which he was unfamiliar", and in concurrence with the other two judges on the bench, refused the application with the stricture that he was astonished that such an application should have been brought.

Towards the end of September, 1893, 29 Indians, who had applied to the Resident Magistrate of the Klip River Division to have their names placed on the voters' list, when the Ladysmith voters' list came up before him for revision, were refused permission on the ground that Arabs were placed by special law under the jurisdiction of special courts, and being subject to special laws e.g. the Pass and the Liquor laws, they were disqualified under the provisions of the Charter and the several laws amending the same. They had, therefore, no right to be on the list.

Indians appealed to the Supreme Court against this decision. Mr Morcom, the Attorney-General, appearing on their behalf, argued that the fact of all such cases being decided by the Magistrate who dealt with Europeans removed all disabilities from the Indian voters. A special law must of necessity entail the existence of a special court to administer it. The only special court affecting Indians was the Protector of Immigrants' Court, which had been abolished, and since then all Indians, whether free or indentured, had been amenable to the same courts as the Europeans of the Colony. If, on the other hand, it was held that the Indian Immigration Law of 1891 created a special law and the magistrate administering the law *ipso facto* constituted a special tribunal, then every employer of Indian labour came within this law when the Magistrate was administering the law as a special tribunal in master and servants cases. In other words, if the Indian Immigration Law disqualified Indians from being voters because it placed them under special law then it equally disqualified their employers who came under the same law in certain of their relations with the Indians in their employ. The section 118 of the coolie Law was confined to indentured Indians and did not apply to free Indians.

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The applicants, the Attorney-General submitted, were all British subjects and not aliens. All possessed the necessary property qualifications, either as freeholders or renters, and had not been convicted of any infamous offence. The Magistrate was, therefore, wrong in refusing their application for being included in the voters' list. The Supreme Court accepted the Attorney-General's plea and referred back the case to Ladysmith Magistrate for further hearing, to clear some technical points, as to the property qualifications of the applicants and also as to any special disqualification under which they might labour.[31]

All three attempts to eliminate the Indian vote having thus failed, the anti-Indian white combine proposed that an anti-Asiatic League should be formed with the object of dealing with the Indian question "once and for all". Commenting on the Supreme Court's decision in the Ladysmith case the *Natal Advertiser* wrote that if the net effect of the Judge's decision was to show that no existing statute disfranchised the Indians, then such a statute ought to be passed. "One way or another all Asiatics must be prevented from exercising the franchise in this Colony."[32]

The cry was raised that unless something was done to prevent it, in a few years the "coolie vote" would swamp the European vote. The Asiatic population of Natal was already larger than the European and if the former was to have access to the franchise, "then it will only be a few years until the latter are completely outvoted. Then our children will have cause to curse us for our enormous folly."[33]

There was no ground whatever for this fear as Gandhiji subsequently showed by an analysis of the comparative figures of Indians, "natives" and Europeans possessing the necessary qualification for the right of franchise. But to such a pitch had the popular feeling been worked up on the question of Indian Immigrants by the white political demagogues that it was made an election issue, particularly in the case of the Durban candidates for the Natal Assembly and, although all parties were united on the question of constitutional reform, the working men's party refused to cooperate with the Forward Party, headed by Sir John Robinson, unless the Asiatic Question was made a plank in the platform of the latter.

Natal on the eve of self-government was in the process of economic transition marked by a struggle for power between the two main groups,—the planter and estate holder class, on the one hand, and the working men's class, the class that lives by labour directly or indirectly, on the other. Under one-man-one-vote principle on which the Natal Constitution was based, the former was steadily losing ground to the latter, and the labourer, i.e. the urban wage earner, with his overwhelming numerical superiority was fast becoming the dominant political power. The *Natal Advertiser* was the mouthpiece of the one, the *Natal Witness* of the other.

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The theory of the labourer was that the Colony existed for the purpose of supplying him with a field of employment and he had therefore the strongest objection to foreign immigration. The Natal Government, while realising the need of the planter class for the supply of cheap labour, dared not antagonise too much the working class, and the Colonial Office sympathised with the view that the Colonies should rather become a means of providing comfortably for the surplus population of England than for the surplus population of India.

Election time is the season for political parties and individuals to go ahunting for a scapegoat for all their sins of omission and commission. The sugar planter of Natal, having come increasingly under fire for the importation of Indian immigrant labour for his plantations at the tax payer's expense, sought deftly to turn the rising tide of popular discontent from him and his "coolie" plantation labour by diverting it to the Indian trader. "Without doubt," wrote the *Natal Advertiser*, "the Asiatic is most undesirable addition to our population," but if the people of the Colony looked more closely into the "coolie" question, they would find that in crying out in a general way against the "coolie" the fact was being lost sight of that "the real curse of the community" was not so much the "coolie" labourer and hawker as the Indian trader.

> If instead of thus hauling them all into the same sack and consigning them *en masse* to perdition a little discrimination is exercised, it will be seen that. . .the coolie, as labourer, hawker and servant, is the least objectionable, and the Indian trader the most dangerous and harmful of all.[34]

It is easier to raise a Frankenstein than to control it. In the campaign of calumny following this, that was let loose against the "Asiatic", no distinction was made between pedlar and "coolie" on the one hand and trader on the other. The Indian became the *bete noire*. No word in the best English dictionary, to quote Gandhiji, was sufficiently strong "to damn him with". He was "dirt of Asia", "the real canker that was eating into the vitals of the community". "These parasites" who had "swarmed over the coast like the locusts"; "squalid coolies with truthless tongues and artful ways"; "pigs", "swine" and "filthy vermin" —these were some of the choice epithets that were showered on him. A Natal paper in doggerel caricatured him as "A thing black and lean and a long way from clean, which they call the accursed Hindoo". "He loafs all around, and he squats on the ground, while his clothes are a long way from new". "He is chockful of vice and lives upon rice, . . . I heartily cuss the Hindoo".[35] In the press he was referred to only as "Ramysamy", "Mr Samy", "Mr Coolie" or the "black man". The "drastic and commendable" measures, adopted in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State to get rid of the Indian, were held up as a model that the two British Colonies should also adopt if Natal and

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the Cape were not to become "the asylum of all these outcastes from the Interior States".[36]

Concluding its diatribe the *Natal Advertiser* delivered itself as follows:

These wily Asiatics. . .taking advantage of the wholesale (white) dealers . . . have also driven out the small European trader. . . . The place which he once occupied is now taken by these wretched Asiatics, who live a semi-barbaric life, spend nothing, send all their savings to Calcutta and go insolvent when they please. . . . With respect to these 'Indian traders' there should be no hesitancy shown and no quarter given. They must be expelled, if possible, and if that cannot be effected forthwith, then *at least they can be so taxed as not to make it worth their while to remain longer in the Colony.*[37]

Hitherto such attacks had gone unchallenged. The Indian business community had never bothered about what appeared in newspapers about them. But now there was a different type of an Indian in their midst. For once Gandhiji let himself be drawn out of his shell. Joining issue with the *Natal Advertiser* he wrote that granting a majority of Asiatic traders did become insolvent, which was not at all the case, did this not rather show that there must be a defect in the Insolvency Law? And in any case could that be a good reason for driving all "Asiatic" traders lock, stock and barrel, out of the Colony of South Africa? "Does not the very fact that these traders do get credit from the European merchants show that they are not after all so bad as they are portrayed by you?"

As for the small European trader being driven out,

This shows, it would appear, a greater competency on the part of the Indian trader in commerce, and this very superior competency is to be a reason for his expulsion! I ask you, Sir, is this fair? . . . Is it a sound policy to stifle healthy competition?

Taking next the charge against the Indian that he lived a semi-barbaric life, he continued:

It would be highly interesting to learn your views of a semi-barbaric life. I have some notion of the life they live. If a room without a nice, rich carpet and ornamental hangings, a dinner table (perhaps unvarnished) without an expensive table-cloth, with no flowers to decorate it, with no wines spread, no pork or beef *ad lib*, be a semi-barbaric life; if a white comfortable dress, specially adapted to a warm climate, which, I am told, many Europeans envy them in the trying heat of summer, be a semi-barbaric life; if no beer, no tobacco, no ornamental walking stick, nor golden watch chain, no luxuriously-fitted sitting room, be a semi-barbaric life; if, in short, what one commonly understands by a simple, frugal life be a semi-barbaric life, then, indeed, the Indian traders must plead guilty to the charge, and

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the sooner the semi-barbarity is wiped out from the highest Colonial civilisation, the better.

It was not an advocate arguing from his brief but a convinced apostle and practiser of the gospel of the simple life, that had inspired some of the best English minds with whom he had come in contact as a student in London, who spoke. The words came from his lips as from one with authority.

Pointing out that Indians were not a political danger to the Government since they meddled very little, if at all, in politics, that they were law-abiding, "not a single case of an Indian having suffered imprisonment, or even been charged with theft, robbery, or any of the heinous crimes", and that their teetotal habit made them exceptionally peaceful citizens, he concluded:

> But they spend nothing, says the leading article under discussion. Don't they? I suppose they live on air or sentiments. We know that Becky lived on nothing a year in *Vanity Fair*. And here a whole class seems to have been found out doing the same. It is to be presumed they have to pay nothing for shop rents, taxes, butcher's bills, grocer's bills, clerk's salaries, etc. etc. One would indeed like to belong to such a blessed class of traders, especially in the present critical condition of the trade all the world over.
>
> It seems, on the whole, that their simplicity, their total abstinence from intoxicants, their peaceful and above all, their businesslike and frugal habits, which should serve as a recommendation, are really at the bottom of all this contempt and hatred of the poor Indian traders. And they are British subjects. Is this Christian-like . . . is this civilisation? I pause for reply.[38]

For the first time Indian voice was heard in self-defence in the Colony in accents that were before long to become familiar to the South African ear. Something unprecedented had happened—though the whites had not yet realised it—that was to make the Indian question the question of questions not only for Natal but for the whole of South Africa.

4

The Forward Party came out on top as a result of the election and Sir John Robinson was invited to form the first Ministry under Responsible Government in Natal. On September 28, His Excellency the Hon. Sir Walter Francis Hely-Hutchinson, Governor of Natal and Zululand and Supreme Chief over the Native population, arrived in Durban on his way to Pietermaritzburg—the capital, and was presented an address of welcome by Dada Abdulla Sheth, M. K. Kamruddin, Amad Tilly, Dawud Muhammad, Amad Jiva, Parsi Rustomji, all leading businessmen of Natal and A. C. Pillay, on behalf of the Indian community. The address, which was read out by Amad Tilly, among other things, stated:

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We bespeak, with your Excellency's permission, that consideration towards our community which we are confident, your Excellency, representing Her Most Gracious Majesty, will be pleased to grant to us.[39]

The Governor, using the language of the "ambiguous middle", in the course of his reply said:

Under the new administration your community as well as every other class of Her Majesty's subjects in Natal will receive due consideration.[40]

But in his speech at the opening of the first session of the Natal Parliament, he alluded to the "undesirability of Asiatics being allowed the franchise".[41]

No sooner did the new Ministry begin to function in October, 1893, than they in fulfilment of their election pledges despatched an official deputation of Messrs. H. Binns, a member of the Legislative Assembly of Natal, and H. L. Mason, the Protector, to India with a letter dated December 4, 1893, addressed by the Governor of Natal to Lord Elgin, the Viceroy and Governor General of India proposing

(i) to raise the period of indenture from five years to an indefinite period, with a corresponding increase in wages up to twenty shillings per month.

(ii) in the event of the Indian refusing to enter into such further indenture after the first two years' indenture, to compel him to return to India at the Colony's expense.

(iii) that in case he refused to return to India or renew indenture he should be required to pay an annual tax of £25.

The delegates arrived in Calcutta on the night of January 15, 1894, and on January 17 saw E. C. Buck, Secretary to the Government of India, Revenue and Agricultural Department, with whom they had a series of talks. As soon as the object of their visit became known in India, a public-spirited Indian gentleman, G. E. Mahalingam Iyer of Negapatam, Editor, *Bhaskara Gnanodayam*, who had a number of friends in Kimberley and elsewhere in South Africa and was very well informed of the situation there, in a letter dated January 6, 1894, to E. C. Buck, detailed the indignities that were being heaped on Indians by the whites in Natal and the recent attempt in the Ladysmith case to prevent them from exercising their right of franchise. Referring to the mission of the Binns-Mason delegation, he wrote:

If the European colonists of Natal are so intolerant of a coloured race residing amongst them and so selfish as to think that the Colony is exclusively a preserve for whites as against the 'coloured' classes of Her Majesty's subjects, they. . .(had) better seek labour elsewhere among those who will not offend them by their colour, namely the white people themselves.[42]

He concluded with an appeal to the Government of India not to "consent to any conditions or grant any privileges to outsiders that

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seem likely to interfere with the rights and liberties of natives of India as loyal subjects of Her Gracious Majesty the Queen".[43]

Characterising it as "rather in favour of repatriation than not", E. C. Buck with his bureaucratic prejudice against Indian intelligentsia and Indian publicists in particular, made on this letter the following annotation dated February 3, 1894:

> The writer indeed says 'better not have Indians at all if you cannot have them except on insulting conditions', but this is merely to cut off the nose to spite the face.
>
> Our object is to relieve crowded tracts *rather than to relieve the vain feelings of newspaper editors and men of his class.*[44]

As early as 1891 the Natal Government had, under the growing pressure of the public opinion in Natal against the settlement of the Indian emigrants as permanent settlers in what was loosely termed a "white man's colony" and the opposition of the planting interests to the closure of the emigration altogether, made a proposal (1) for a compulsory extension to 10 years of the 5 year term for the indentured labourers and (2) for the compulsory return of the Indian at the end of his service. The second proposal could not be put through unless it were made a crime by the statute law for a British Indian to remain in the Colony, and was vetoed by the Secretary of State even before it was addressed to the Government of India. The other proposal was rejected by the Indian Government on the following grounds:

(1) The compulsory term was limited to 5 years in all Colonies,
(2) In no other Colony was re-indenture compulsory,
(3) It would be hardship to the emigrant to deprive him of his option to return,
(4) or of his liberty to make the best use of his second five years.

The case was to come up before the Viceroy's Executive Council on Thursday, February 15. In a note submitted to the Government of India supporting the proposals of the Binns-Mason Delegation Mr. Buck urged that they eliminated objections (1), (2) & (3) of those made against the former scheme. As for (4), which referred to the deprivation of the "coolies'" liberty to make the best use of his second five years, he dismissed it with the remark that encouraging time-expired emigrants to settle in foreign colonies would be a "cut-throat" policy, as in that event their earnings would remain in the Colony instead of being sent or brought back to India. The returned "coolie" who settled in India was generally well-to-do and no further burden on his native country, and his place in the Colony was taken by those who were a burden. Retention in foreign colonies of time-expired Indians would decrease the number required from India and diminish the scope of emigration from India. On the other hand, if the fear of time-expired Indians settling in colonies, where there was prejudice against them, was removed, it would open

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up an unlimited scope for emigration to colonies like Australia, that had closed their doors to Indian immigration. To sacrifice the interests of the entire emigrating population in an attempt to protect the "alleged" interests of the individual emigrant would be like arguing "whether it is better for a starving pauper to have beef or mutton for his dinner when if meat is insisted on there is no chance of having any dinner at all".

Dr. Roderick Macleod, the Bengal Protector of Emigrants, expressed doubt whether it was fair to the "coolie" to bind him down at the time of recruitment to an obligation which after arrival in the Colony he might not like viz. that he should not remain as a free labourer. But, Mr. Buck contended that without obligation it was probable that no "Coolies" would be allowed to go to Natal at all: "The question is whether it is better for the Indian population to have Natal emigration kept open with the obligation or to have it closed". Dr. Macleod had further suggested that the scale of pay was not sufficiently liberal. Mr. Buck, however, felt that if the scale was "liberal enough to keep the emigration going", it was all "we need ask for".

Sir Charles Mitchell, Emigration Agent for Natal, had admitted to the Government of India officials that the retention of free Indian labour was not intrinsically a bad thing for the Colony and Mr. Binns had himself in the past been averse to the Delegation's latest proposals on the ground of fairness. This, argued Mr. Buck, instead of militating against the proposals in question only proved the "disinterested nature of the action of the Natal Government and Mr. Binns now in connection with the Binns-Mason deputation."

The Hon. Sir A. P. Macdonnell, some time Lt. Governor of Bengal, and member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, while holding that it was better that emigrants should settle in the Colonies to which they emigrated than return to their place of origin, felt that rather than they should remain at home it was better they should emigrate and make money even without settling. Whether the right to settle in the Colony after the termination of the period of indenture should or should not be insisted on was a question for the colony and Secretary of State, with which the Government of India had "only so much concern as attaches to a preferable choice between two eligible courses".[45] The Indian "coolie" being a British subject had, of course, a right to go to any part of the British Empire he liked and settle there. But if he contracted to go to a Colony for five years, and to return at the end of that period, it was "but reasonable that he may be required to keep to his contract". To risk closure of emigration by insisting on the inalienable right of a British subject to live where he liked under the British flag, "even in contravention of an explicit undertaking to the contrary" would be, he argued, "doing to India and the Indian Coolie an ill turn." He was, therefore, in favour of the Natal Colony being

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allowed to contract with the Indian "coolie" for a compulsory service in the country, it being obligatory on him to return to the port from which he sailed at the termination of his indenture.

Sir Charles Bradley Pritchard K.C.I.E. agreed with Sir A. P. Macdonnell on the understanding that the entire arrangement was one of "free contract" between the Indian "coolie" and his employer.

In refreshing contrast with this sickening callousness as to the fate of the poor Indian labourer was the strong note of dissent entered by Sir A. E. Miller, legal member of the Viceroy's Council. He saw no means whereby a "coolie" could be compelled "specifically to perform" his contract to return at the end of his contract. He was emphatic that the Government of India "ought not to agree to any law which would punish the coolie criminally for breaking his contract in this respect". If the time-expired "coolie" chose to forgo his right to a free passage and remained in the Colony he was perfectly entitled to do so and if this breach of contract caused any damage to the Natal Government that would be subject for a civil suit. Or, the Natal Legislature might, if Colonial Office let them, impose a residential tax on time-expired "coolies"

but to ask the Government of India to agree that its subjects may be imprisoned or forcibly deported because they prefer to remain in a British Colony and are willing to forgo their right to a passage home, is to ask what I hope it will not entertain for a moment, and if it does, I trust the proposal will be negatived by the Secretary of State.

Sir J. Westland, financial member of the Governor General's Council, provided the counterpoise to Sir A. E. Miller's dissenting note. Considering the changing pattern of political power in Natal, he thought it "not unreasonable" on the part of Colonies, who had the power, to prevent the immigration of cheap labour into the Colony. It was a mistake to think that the Colonial Office "would raise its little finger to protect our coolies against legislation of a kind that would effectually drive them out of the Colony". In the case of an infant Colony like Natal it might "so far screw up its courage as to veto a law imposing imprisonment as a punishment for remaining in the Colony" but the Colonists of Natal would

yet make residence as a free labourer an impossibility to time-expired Indians. . . . My belief is that so long as the coolie is performing labour at the plantations of a kind on which white men cannot engage you may possibly secure him fair treatment from the Colonists. But the moment he becomes a free labourer, and a competitor, however remote and unequal with the Colonists no power on earth will secure his position. *The ordinary Colonist has little idea of justice as compared with legislation and no idea of abstract justice will prevent his using his legislative powers to obtain his ends.* (Italics mine)

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Lieut. General Sir Henry Brackenbury, military member of the Viceroy's Council, admitted that if the planters in Natal could not get "coolies" they would be ruined, but pointed out that their interest was in a minority, and the up-country commanded a majority. This up-country interest was opposed to the settlement of "coolies" in Natal after their indentured period of service. "If they cannot prevent coolies from settling they will stop the Government grant and the immigration of coolies." He saw no objection to the "coolie" being required to enter into a contract to return to India at the end of indenture and it might safely be left to Natal to find the means of enforcing the contract. "If it cannot enforce it, no harm is done to India. The Colonial Office would not, the Governor of Natal would not, sanction a law making his not returning a penal office."

Sir George White, Commander-in-Chief in India and extraordinary member of the Viceroy's Council, was of the view that while there would not be "the slightest difficulty" in persuading the 'coolie' before he left India to contract himself out of the right to remain in Natal, as at the time of entering into the contract, all his doubts and fears would be directed towards the risk of his not being allowed to return to the native country, the desire to settle in Natal, would develop later as a result of his residence and of the status he had gained there". It would be very undesirable therefore, he felt, that

> the Government of India should lend itself to a contract which prohibits the exercise of free choice of residence in a British Colony under circumstances not realised by the coolie at the time he makes the contract and under conditions which might arise later and are likely to induce him to settle in the Colony. . . .
>
> To a native of India emigration must be a leap in the dark. A system of emigration therefore countenanced by Government should be safeguarded by paternal care. Would that care be exercised in sending coolie men and women to Natal under conditions less favourable than those they now enjoy, knowing that they will be forced to return in five years, or soon after, to their native country, where, in the meantime, they have abandoned their moorings?
>
> The clause in the *contract enforcing return is manifestly for the interests of the Colonists, not of the coolies; and I do not think we are called up to take any step of doubtful advantage to the coolie for the sake of the Colony.* (Italics mine)

These clear warnings of the dissenting members, so eloquently expressed, were disregarded by Mr. Buck and his other colleagues, to whom the growing destitute surplus population of India was just an administrative nuisance, somehow to be got rid of. The poor Indian labourer was sacrificed to the greed of the white Natal planter.

As a result of the talks with the Binns-Mason Delegation — though nothing was reduced to writing—an understanding was

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reached which, it was expected, would serve as a basis of a formal agreement between the two Governments concerned. As early as 1875, referring to the withdrawal of Government of India's prohibition of Indian indentured labour Lord Salisbury, the Secretary of State for India, had unequivocally stated as an "indispensable condition of the proposed agreement", that such labourers should rest assured that after their indentures had been served they would be "free men in all respects, with privileges no whit inferior to those of any other class of Her Majesty's subjects resident in the colonies"[46]. But Lord Elgin, who had confessed to an Indian friend that "he knew nothing about India and would be a fool if he did not allow himself to be guided by his advisers",[47] accepted without demur the delegation's proposal regarding reindenture, provided the return passage was borne by the Natal Government. Natal was quite willing to pay this small price for an assured regular supply of "semi-servile" labour. On February 1, 1894, the Delegation wrote to the Government of India that they were prepared to recommend the acceptance of the condition that "the coolie should have the right to claim the return passage from our Government."[48]

Lord Elgin also accepted in principle the Delegation's proposal that the Natal Government could impose a "residence tax" on those who decided to stay in Natal after the expiry of their indenture without renewing their indenture. The only reservation he made was that the Natal Government could on no account take criminal action against a "coolie" if he refused to return to India, as Lord Kimberley, Secretary of State for India, would never agree to the insertion of a penal clause.

On February 28, 1894, taking up the brief on the Natal planters' behalf, E. C. Buck addressed a note to the Governments of Bengal and Madras urging the acceptance of the Binns-Mason proposals on the ground that unless the existing Emigration Law was modified the Natal Government might stop the importation of Indian labour; that in 1891 they wanted to stop the influx of Indian labour altogether; that the Emigration Law was enacted "to give employment to the surplus labourers of India in the various colonies"; and that, if advantage was not taken of the favourable attitude of the party in power in Natal under Responsible Government in regard to the importation of Indian labour, that valuable avenue to the employment of Indian surplus labour would be closed. The Government of India, the note went on, while they had no sympathy with the view which would prevent any subject of the Crown from settling in any colony under the British flag, "as a compromise" suggested that they should not object to a "residence tax" being imposed on those who stayed on in Natal without renewing their indenture or to "any other measure short of a penal law" that the Natal Government might adopt."[49]

On the publication of the Binns-Mason delegation's report in the Natal Gazette towards the close of April, 1894, the position of the Colony

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being allowed to enact a law providing for the return of a class of immigrants considered undesirable, which it would be powerless to enforce, was strongly objected to. But the delegates urged that, considering that the Government of India had in the past "resolutely set its face against compulsory return condition and had never granted it to any Colony", the Colonists would be well advised to accept the proposed legislation as "a great advance", especially as it was intended, as an auxiliary measure alongside of it, to impose a "prohibitive" residential tax on "free Indians". This, they gave to understand, would not be objected to by the Government of India.

It was admitted that this would be a piece of class legislation that would affect Natal alone; but special conditions, like uncommon diseases, required special treatment. Unless some check was provided, in five years' time, warned the Government's mouthpiece, the *Natal Mercury*, "we shall have a coolie population of 53,000 apart altogether from Arabs or Indian traders."[50]

The Natal planters' filibuster against the Asiatic did not avail them much. Side by side with the delegates' report, the Indian Trust Board Law Amendment Bill was introduced in the Natal Parliament discontinuing the annual payment of £10,000 from the public exchequer in aid of Indian immigration that the sugar planter had enjoyed for a quarter of a century. When the planters growled at this the *Natal Mercury* retorted that nobody wanted the planter to import Indian labour, and if he did it was purely for his own advantage.

> The whole question with the planters is one of pounds, shillings, and pence and if it will not pay the planter to pay the total cost of the importation of the coolies he wants they will employ those who are here already. . . . Only the free Indian naturally expects higher wages than the planter has hitherto cared to give, principally because the Colony was aiding him to get his labour at a low rate.[51]

5

Natal under Responsible Government had a bicameral Legislature —a Legislative Council of 11 nominated members appointed for ten years and an elected Legislative Assembly of 27 members with a life of four years. The Executive consisted of Governor with a Council of Ministers. Among the private Bills published in the Government Gazette to be introduced in the first session of the Natal Parliament was one by Henry Bale providing that "no person who is of Indian, Asiatic, or Polynesian decent or origin shall be entitled to be placed on a voters' list or to vote at the election."[52] The October session of the Parliament, however, was a short one. In the ensuing session Government itself introduced a measure known as Franchise Amendment Bill to deal with

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the problem of Indians who had come as free immigrants. It aimed at excluding the Indians as Indians from the franchise except those whose names were already on the voters' list, and was the first piece of legislation affecting Indians which was based on racial grounds.

The only dissenting voice raised against it was from the Cape Colony. Not that there were no men with a conscience in Natal, but in their ignorance Indians had allowed their case to go by default and the press was all controlled by the white vested interests. As the oldest British settlement and the portal through which British culture had entered South Africa the Cape Colony had been the least affected by colour prejudice. It had received more than its due share of the nineteenth century British tradition of humanitarianism and philanthropy. There had been more inter-mixing of black and white blood here than in any other South African State. It had a fair proportion of Malays in its population, to whom the Cape was their motherland and Dutch their mother tongue and who, having lived with the Dutch from the outset, had largely adopted the Dutch way of life. Many Muslims had married Malay women. The Dutch could not very well legislate against Malays. There were also in the Cape Colony a number of large-hearted liberal leaders like Mr. Merriman, known as the Gladstone of South Africa, the Moltinoes and the Schreiners.

John Xavier Merriman was a member of the first and subsequent ministries after the grant of self-government to the Cape in 1872, and again the Premier in the last ministry when the Union came in 1910. Sir John Moltino became the first Premier of the Colony in 1872. W. P. Schreiner was a well-known advocate, sometime Attorney-General and later Premier. His sister Olive Schreiner, the celebrated novelist, was a fearless crusader for women's emancipation. Deeply steeped in the British liberal tradition Mr. Merriman, the Moltinoes and the Schreiners had championed the Negroes' rights whenever they were in danger. They made a distinction between Indians and Negroes. The latter being the original inhabitants of South Africa, they held, could not be deprived of their natural rights, but they did not consider it unfair to legislate in the case of Indians to eliminate the danger of their undue competition. Still they had a kindly feeling towards Indians also.

A demand for special legislation against any section of a community, wrote the Cape organ *E. P. Herald*, "is generally a sign of something very wrong".[53] In the case under reference the Europeans could not, in common justice, claim to be right. In the first place the Indian had been brought to Natal and "not only allowed, but encouraged to settle there". In the second place, he was a "law-abiding citizen, given to neither riots nor rebellion", and, in the third he was there as a citizen of one portion of the empire removing to another. "He may be objectionable in many ways—so are many Europeans, . . . but he is a British subject."

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Characterising as manifestly unjust the Natal stand that Indians must never be conceded the right of franchise because, according to the "latest teaching" of science "as the native, because he is a long way behind the European . . . civilisation, is under special disqualifications, so should the Indian who is not quite on a par . . . be also subject to special disqualifications though . . . in a modified degree", the paper warned:

On the question of franchise, our friends in Natal will find they will have to treat all alike if they wish to retain the respect of the world. Whatever disabilities, they may choose to impose with the object of keeping Ramasammy out of the Legislature or off the voters' roll, must apply to all. Although they have sown the wind, like a many other foolish people who indulge in such follies, they don't care about reaping the crop which proverbially follows. The Indian population of Natal, some 40,000 strong, is a factor to be counted with in politics, and will have to be met in a more statesman-like manner than disfranchisement.[54]

The warning proved prophetic. But Natal was determined to go its way; because, as *Natal Mercury* later wrote, "rightly or wrongly, justly or unjustly" a strong feeling existed among the Europeans in South Africa, "and especially in the two Republics against Indians or any other Asiatics being allowed unrestricted right to the franchise", and the Natal Europeans did not wish to lose caste with fellow Europeans in the two Republics under the "fatal ban of being a semi-Asiatic country out of touch and out of harmony with the other European Governments of the country".[55]

In moving the second reading of the Bill in the Natal Assembly on June 21, 1894, Sir John Robinson upheld the racial character of the proposed measure. There were few classes in the colony, he said, "but several races, and in the fact of the plurality of races rested one of the principal perplexities of the future.

He thought he might lay it down as an axiom that the franchise right was a race privilege. . . . It was the most precious inheritance of an emancipated race and the product of civilisation amongst *Caucasian races, and especially the Anglo-Saxon. . . . The Asiatic . . . could not be considered as* an offshoot of the soil or *an offspring of the races that had undertaken the duty of colonising South Africa. . . .* The men who had occupied and colonised South Africa . . . were determined to affix and impress upon South Africa in the future the character and institutions of a Christian and European civilisation. And if this Continent were to be properly reclaimed from barbarism . . . it would only be through the recognition of these principles (Italics mine).

Those who would be affected by the bill before the House, he continued, had not come to Natal "with any grand political pretensions or aspirations" but only to make money or earn a livelihood. When they

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arrived there they were "as regardless of franchise privileges in the future as they had been ignorant of them in the past", the franchise represented to them "a new and absolutely strange weapon", whereas "familiarity, wisdom and experience were requisite for its proper use." The amendment "would not deprive these people of anything that they had had in the past".

He made the astounding statement that discrimination against Indians, who were subjects of the British Crown, was in no sense inconsistent with the ideal of the British Empire of which Natal was a member. Far from that, what they were doing was "duty the colony owed to the Empire"; because

> if these people suddenly found themselves endowed with these new and strange privileges, there were grounds for believing that they might become propagandists of agitation and instruments of sedition in that great country from which they came.[56]

Indians had no claim, because they were an alien race, Sir John concluded—apparently unconscious of the irony of his words in the face of what was happening in the Transvaal Republic, where at this very time the British Government were encouraging and even engineering an armed rising of the Uitlanders against the Kruger regime for denying them equal rights with Burghers.

Henry Bale, while admitting that colour should be no disqualification for the franchise, suggested amid applause that an educational disqualification should be introduced to the same end. "No one unable to read and write should be able to exercise the franchise right whether white or black". To be logical and consistent the Bill should disqualify on the ground of "incompetence" all Asiatics—even those, who were "by accident" already upon the roll—except such as for "special reasons" were entitled to a vote.

Harry Escombe, who had succeeded Morcom as Attorney-General, intervening objected that Mr Bale might perhaps see that while they were dealing fairly to men coming into the country, they would not be dealing fairly to those who were already there by acting on his suggestion. To say, "If you come here, the condition of your incoming is so and so", was one thing. But to "allow men to come here, trade, marry and grow families—and then take away something that they had got there was not a matter of logic but of a totally different character, in which he could not give his consent."

Another member of the Natal Parliament, Mr. Ryley hoped that the principle of exclusion would be altered to prevent aliens voting also in Municipal elections.

But the unkindest cut of all came from Mr. Tatham. Having been returned to the Assembly with the help of Indian votes, he repaid his debt of gratitude to his Indian constituents by remarking that "it

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was evident these people did not desire the franchise, for although this Bill had been before the country several weeks, no objection had been raised to it."[57]

The second reading of the Franchise Amendment Bill was rushed through the same day on which it was taken up before the House rose at 10 o'clock at night. The general trend of criticism in the press was that the Bill did not go far enough inasmuch as it had not been made retrospective, and Asiatics had not been disqualified from voting at municipal as well as at Parliamentary elections. "Ramasamy in or near town is all very well as a grower or purveyor of vegetables," wrote the *Natal Witness*, "but he is an insanitary nuisance. . . . We don't want him either to make Town Councillors or be himself made such by the votes of his fellows."[58] Even the Cape opinion, that had fallen foul of Natal over the racial character of the Franchise Amendment Bill and the policy of denial of the franchise by one portion of the British Empire to citizens of another, was at one with it as to the goal. The presence of the "mild Hindu" in their midst was of course undesirable, but a better way of keeping him out of the Colony, it was suggested, was for local authorities "in a quiet way" to make the town "an uncomfortable place of residence for the wily and filthy Hindu". For instance, the Coronet might aim a crippling blow at their "unfair competition" by imposing a heavy tax, even a "prohibitive licence" on the hawkers. An even more effective way would be for the municipal authorities to institute "the most rigorous prosecutions" for every breach of sanitary laws, such as over-crowding, depositing filth on their premises or throwing rubbish into the streets, "for they are not the people to remain long in a place where they are prohibited from living in their own way".[59] Still another solution proferred was to pass a measure "similar in terms to our Locations Act, applying to the Native and the Indian alike"; in other words, to create a number of Indian "Glen Greys" where "the younger generations of the Indian population" could be educated "*to an appreciation of the dignity of labour*,"[60] and help maintain a steady supply of cheap "coolie" labour for the Natal white to fulfil his mission of civilisation and progress". As between the Cape and Natal opinion, the only choice before the Indians thus was whether they would be fried in butter or lard!

It was in this circumstance that, two days after the second reading in the Assembly, the Franchise Amendment Bill passed through the Committee stage and was scheduled to come up for the third reading on June 27. Humanly speaking it seemed dead certain that it would in normal course receive the Royal Assent and come into operation in a matter of days. Nothing short of a miracle could, it seemed, avert the doom impending over the Indian community, of which it was even now blissfully unaware, when a trifling incident happened that altered the whole current of events.

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CHAPTER XVII

THE HINGE OF FATE

1

In the closing week of June, 1894, the Dada Abdulla case being over, Gandhiji returned to Durban and began preparation for returning home. But Dada would not let him go without a fitting send off. He gave a farewell party in his honour at Sydenham, a pleasant seaside resort and suburb of Durban, to which all the leading Indians of Durban were invited. It was proposed to spend the whole day there. While Gandhiji was casually turning over the leaves of a newspaper that a friend had handed him, a para in a corner of the *Natal Mercury*, founded by Sir John Robinson's father and owned by Sir John, who was its editor-in-chief for many years, before he became Premier, caught his eye. It was captioned "Indian Franchise".

What he read gave him a shock. Justifying the Bill to exclude Indians from the franchise the journal wrote:

> The Asiatic comes of a race impregnated with an effete civilisation with not an atom of knowledge of the principles or traditions of representative Government. As regards his instinct and training he is a political infant of the most backward type from whom it is an injustice to expect that he should . . . have any sympathy with our political aspirations. He thinks differently and reasons in a plane unknown to European logic. As a rule our political questions are as mystical and involved to the Asiatic understanding as their Vedic literature is to us.

Among reasons put forward in defence of the measure were that (a) few Indians were so well-versed in English language as to be able to read the newspapers and be sufficiently well-informed of the political questions of the day to be able to form an independent judgment on any matter of colonial importance; (b) they had nothing to do with the actual colonisation of Natal; (c) they were "parasitical" in their habits, not "independent prospectors"; (d) John Stuart Mill had said that "justice consists of giving to man not the half of what he asks but the whole of what he ought to have". The Bill under discussion completely satisfied this test of justice, as the Indian had never asked for the franchise. He was getting "not the half of what he had asked for but the whole of what he ought to have". It was an "injustice even to have given the Indian the franchise"; it would be justice to restrict the

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privilege according to the provisions of the Bill. "They probably feel they had much better be relieved of a power whose influence for good or evil they do not understand"; (e) presence of their names on the electoral roll would not be conducive to political morality, "considering how easily and blindly they can be led into the polling booth"; (f) Indian population would suffer in no shape or form by their exclusion from the franchise privileges as their interests would be adequately cared for by the representatives of those included in the franchise. The Premier had given the assurance in Parliament that "if the Colonists arrogated to themselves the sole duties of Government they took upon their shoulders responsibility that the Government should be fair and just, and by claiming to be the dominant race they undertook that their rule should be one of generosity and justice to the unenfranchised."[1]

Gandhiji had till then been totally ignorant about the Bill. "Do you know anything about this?" he asked Dada Abdulla.

Neither he nor any of the assembled guests, he was told, knew anything about it. "What can we understand of these matters," Dada Abdulla answered, "we can understand things only that affect our trade." And he described how they had been hounded out of the Orange Free State and their trade extinguished. They had agitated about it but in vain. What, after all, could they, "lame men being unlettered", do?

"It is the first nail in our coffin. It strikes at the root of our self-respect," Gandhiji said to him in a voice vibrant with feeling that startled Dada Abdulla.

Giving the genesis of the movement to exclude them from the franchise, Dada Abdulla described how it had all started, when at the instance of Harry Escombe a number of them had first got themselves enrolled as voters. "Our eyes and ears are the European attorneys here," he pathetically said to Gandhiji.

What about Indians born and educated in South Africa, Gandhiji asked. They had a number of such young men among them. How was it they did not help them?

"They keep away from us," the Dada replied in despair. Being Christians, he explained, they were completely under the thumb of white clergymen, who in their turn were the creatures of the Government. "They do not regard themselves as a part of the Indian community." But it was also a fact, he admitted, that the non-Christian sections of the Indian community also had never tried to cultivate them or recognised them as a part and parcel of themselves.

This opened Gandhiji's eyes. Why should Christians cease to regard themselves as Indians, he asked. Was that Christianity? They must make it a point, he told Dada Abdulla, to draw these educated Christian young men to themselves.

"We understand what you say," Dada Abdulla finally said. "Tell us what we should do. We shall abide by your advice."

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Other guests had been following this dialogue. They joined in. One of them said, "I shall tell you what you should do. Cancel your passage, stay here another month and we will fight as you direct us."

"Indeed, indeed," all the others chimed in, "Abdulla Sheth, you must detain Gandhibhai."

Dada Abdulla was a shrewd man. He parried the suggestion. He entirely agreed with them, he told them. But they had as much right to detain "Gandhibhai" as he. "Let us all persuade him to stay on."

"Of course, of course," they all exclaimed.

"But you must not forget he is a barrister, what about his fees?"

"Abdulla Sheth," Gandhiji cut in, "I need no fees for this work. There can be no fees for public work." But, surely, public activity could not be carried on without an initial fund. They would need money for stationery, postage, telegrams, touring etc.; local attorneys might have to be consulted. "This thing cannot be run as a one man show," he finally said, "many must come forward and cooperate. I will be prepared to postpone my departure for a month provided you all promise me your full cooperation."

His offer was greeted with a chorus of "Allah is great and merciful." Money would be forthcoming, they assured him, and as many men as he might need. If only he consented to stay all would be well.

In a matter of minutes the farewell party was turned into a working committee. Dinner over, Gandhiji returned home, thought out his line of action, ascertained the names of those who were on the voters' list and decided to prolong his stay in South Africa for one month.

2

From now on things began to move at a breathless pace. A meeting of Indians was held next day (June 26) at the residence of Dada Abdulla with Sheth Haji Muhammad in the chair. He was looked upon by all Indians in Natal at this time as the foremost Indian leader. Present in this meeting were Sheths Dawud Muhammad, Muhammad Kasam Kamruddin, Adamji Miyakhan, A. Kolandavellu Pillai, C. Lachhiram, Rangasami Padiachi, Amad Jiva, and Parsi Rustomji. Also present were a number of clerks—Manekji, Joshi, Narsinhram and others—employed in the Dada Abdulla and Co. and other firms. They had the thrill for the first time in their life of being invited to participate in public activity. Elevated from employees to public workers, they felt inches taller in stature.

It was resolved to offer opposition to the Franchise Bill, and enrol volunteers. Thanks to the exertions of Subhan Godfrey, Head Master of a mission school, and Paul, the Durban Court Interpreter, a number of Natal born Indians had come to the meeting in answer to the

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invitation. They were mostly Indian Christian youth. They all came forward and enrolled themselves as volunteers.

Gandhiji outlined to them his plan. Absence of protest on their part had been represented as a proof of their tacit approval of the Bill. They must present a petition with as many signatures as possible to the Parliament objecting to the Bill. But as the third reading was to come on the very next day, the first thing to do was to secure a postponement of the Bill. Telegrams were accordingly despatched to the Speaker of the House, Harry Escombe, the Attorney-General, and the Premier, Sir John Robinson, asking for postponement of further discussion of the Bill in view of the petition they were sending.

On June 27, when the Natal Assembly met to take up the third reading of the Franchise Bill, the Premier informed the House that in view of the telegraphic communications that had been received Government proposed to postpone the order for the third reading of the Bill until the next day, as it had no wish to appear to rush the Bill through. The Bill had already been before the public for six weeks and that was the reason why, he said, the order could not be postponed to a later date. The House then resolved into Committee on the Indian Immigration Power Bill that had been introduced, recommending among other things that a new Bill on the basis of the Binns-Mason Delegation's report be introduced next year ensuring that future immigrants would not remain in Natal unless under indenture or subject to a residential tax. After some discussion the Bill was referred to a select committee.

The Speaker accordingly agreed to postpone the discussion of the Bill for one day. It put heart into them. They had the first taste of victory, and of the strength that a sense of solidarity gives, when forgetting time-worn distinctions of high and low, big and small, all stand shoulder to shoulder as comrades in a common cause.

A fair copy of the petition that Gandhiji had drafted was made by an old gentleman, Mr. Arthur, who wrote a bold, beautiful hand and four extra copies, including one for the press, were prepared to some one's dictation from the principal copy, so that all the copies were ready simultaneously. The next thing was to collect signatures. Several leading businessmen offered themselves for the purpose. They went round in their own carriages, or carriages whose hire they paid. Many volunteers with a knowledge of English and several others worked through the night. Five hundred signatures were thus collected in one day and the petition was despatched.

In the evening on Friday June 28, the Strangers' Gallery was "for the first time within the memory of man . . . invaded by Arab and Hindu clothed head and foot", in anticipation of the presentation of the Indian petition to the Assembly. They, to the chagrin of the Europeans, "straightaway appropriated the front seats," so that when ladies

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arrived later in the evening "not being content to take a back seat—they had to retire."[2]

While the Attorney-General was presenting the report of a Select Committee on Indian Trust Board Bill the petition from Dada Muhammad Haji and five hundred Indians in the colony was laid on the table by Mr. Leuchars, the Hon. Member for the Durban Borough. Objection being taken to some of the signatures being in the Indian characters the same were transcribed in English characters by Mr. Paul, the Court interpreter. Thus amended the memorial was admitted, and ordered to be printed for general information on the motion of Mr. Hulett, a member of the Honourable House.[3] The Premier to allow members an opportunity of studying the petition, postponed the third reading of the Franchise Bill till Monday July 2.

The petition was published in the press and was on the whole favourably received. "We must admit," wrote the premier daily of Natal, the *Natal Mercury*, "that the Indians make out a very good case from their point of view in the petition."[4] It produced a very good impression in the Assembly also.

Considering that the petition was conceived and drafted on the spur of the moment in incredibly short time by one who had given no previous thought to it and was, in fact, till then altogether ignorant about the Bill, it must be adjudged a remarkable performance by any standard. Pruned of epithet, factual and matter of fact, and without a single word of vituperation, or anger it stands out as an impressive *tour de force* of intellectual vigour, clear thinking and incisive logic. Gandhiji pointed out that Indians had during times out of mind exercised the franchise prior to the Anglo-Saxon, as was instanced in local self-government. Sir Henry Sumner Maine had testified that the Indian races had been "familiar with representative institutions almost from time immemorial", and that the Teutonic Mark "was hardly so well organised or so *essentially representative* as an Indian village community". Chisolm Anstey had in a speech delivered before the East Indian Association in London said:

> We are apt to forget in this country, when we talk of preparing people in the East by education and all that sort of thing, for Municipal Government and Parliamentary Government, that the East is the parent of Municipalities. Local Self-Government, in the widest acceptation of the term, is as old as the East itself.

Mysore Assembly, and the Durban Trade Council (Panchayat) were more recent instances in point.

Pointing to the fact that in 1891, India had 755 Municipalities and 892 Local Boards with 20,000 Indian members, and that the recently introduced India Council Bill had conceded the principle of representation even into the Legislative Councils of the various Presidencies of India, the petitioners submitted that the exercise of the franchise by

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Indians was not only "no extension of a new privilege they have never before known or enjoyed", the disqualification to exercise it "would be an unjust restriction which, under similar circumstances, would never be put on them in the land of their birth".

As to the competency of the Indian voters for proper exercise of the franchise, that had been questioned on the ground of their lack of education etc., the petitioners cited the authority of that eminent Conservative and English jurist, Frederick Pincutt, who in a speech had characterised as "very foolish" the talk "in this country" about the ignorance of the Indian people and their unfitness for appreciating the great advantage of representative government

> because representative government has nothing to do with education. It has a great deal to do with common sense, and the people of India are gifted with as much common sense, as we have; we exercised the right of election and we had representative institutions many hundreds of years before we possessed any education whatever. Therefore, the educational test goes simply for naught. Those who know the history of our country know very well that two hundred years ago the grossest superstition and ignorance prevailed and yet we had our representative institutions.[5]

"The people of India," Sir George Birdwood had emphatically stated, "are in no intrinsic sense our inferiors" while, "in things measured by some of the false standards, false to ourselves, we pretend to believe in, they are our superiors." Sir Thomas Munro had paid a glowing tribute to India for the excellence of her agriculture, her "unrivalled manufactures", her concern for popular education and the "practice of kindness and general hospitality", while Professor Max Muller had written about the "much abused and more misunderstood Indian" that if he were asked "under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant", he would point to India.[6]

The petitioners prayed on these grounds that the Bill should not be proceeded with.

In Maritzburg on the following day a deputation consisting of Gandhiji with three others waited on some members of the Honourable House, including the Premier and the Attorney-General. The deputation was courteously received and given a patient hearing.[7] But some of the members while they admitted the justice of the prayer contained in the petition told them that it had been presented too late.

Sir John Robinson had remarked in the Assembly that the franchise right was a race privilege and the most precious heritage of the Caucasian race. It could not be extended to Indians who were of a different stock. Pointing out that Max Muller, Morris, Greene, and

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a host of other writers had "with one voice shown very clearly that both the races have sprung from the same i.e. Aryan stock, or rather the Indo-European as many call it", the deputation went on to observe:

> We have no wish whatever to thrust ourselves as members of a brother nation on a nation that would be unwilling to receive us as such, but we may be pardoned if we state the real facts, the alleged absence of which has been put forward as an argument to pronounce us as unfit for the exercise of the franchise.

Sir John during the second reading had added insult to injury, perhaps unwittingly, by remarking that "it would be cruel to expect Indians to exercise the privilege of franchise". Referring to it the deputation pointed out: "We humbly submit that our petition is a sufficient answer to this".

In one of his statements the Premier was reported to have admitted that there were some respectable Indians who were intelligent enough to exercise the franchise. How in common fairness and justice then, the deputation asked, could such Indians be debarred from the privilege?

The Premier had further said that on those who claimed to be the dominant race rested the obligation to see to it that the Government dealt generously with the unfranchised and did them justice. Welcoming this remark, as the proverbial silver lining to a dark cloud, the memorialists went on to say that however unjust his speech might have appeared to them from their point of view,

> it breathed truest sentiments of justice, morality, and what is more, Christianity. So long as such a spirit is noticeable among the chosen of the land, we would never despair of right being done in every case.

They prayed that in consonance with that spirit a Commission of Enquiry might be appointed to go into the question, and if the impartial judgment of an impartial commission pronounced the Indians fit, to allow them to exercise the privilege. As they understood the Bill, in the event of its becoming law, "Indians would rank lower than the rawest native. For, while the latter can educate himself into fitness for the power of election, the former never can. The Bill seems to be so sweeping that even the Indian Member of the British House of Commons, did he come here, would not be fit for becoming a voter." That in itself was a reason for granting the Commission of Enquiry that they had asked for.

A meeting of nearly 100 leading Indians was held in Durban on the premises of Messrs Dada Abdulla and Co. in Field Street on the eve of the third reading of the Bill in the Assembly. It was decided to send a deputation to the Governor. Strong exception was taken to Mr. Tatham's attitude in Parliament towards Indians during the debate on the second reading and the advisability of forming a

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permanent political association for the protection of Indian interests in the colony by "all constitutional methods" and collecting funds for that purpose was discussed and favourably considered. A meeting of Indians was held also at Maritzburg to protest against Mr. Tatham's conduct.

Despite all protests the third reading of the Bill was taken up by the Assembly as scheduled on July 2. The partisans of the measure put up a defence; and, though it was admittedly a lame one, the Bill was passed.

Thereupon a deputation consisting of Gandhiji and six others waited on the Natal Governor. On July 3 they memorialised His Excellency, as the representative of Her Majesty the Queen Empress, to withhold sanction from the measure "that would seem to lay down that an Indian British subject of Her Majesty can never become fit to exercise the franchise."[8]

Simultaneously with the petition to the Natal Assembly telegrams from Verulum, Richmond Road, Mount Edgcombe and Umgeni poured in to the Legislative Council in support of the Indian petition to the Assembly. But they were ruled out by the President on the ground that they had not been presented through a member of the House according to the constitutional procedure. Another petition was consequently moved on July 4 through the Honourable Mr. Campbell, praying that the House use its correctional power in consonance with justice and equity and not endorse the Bill. Referring to the taunt of some of the members of the Lower House that the Indians had woke up too late, the petitioners protested that the consequences of the bill becoming law would be so grave, and their prayer was "so just and modest", that being too late should not have weighed with the Honourable Members of the Assembly at all in considering the petition.

> Instances of Bills being thrown out or modified, under less imperative circumstances, by the Parliaments of civilised countries, after they have passed through the committee stage, would not be difficult to find. Your Petitioners need hardly mention the instance of the House of Lords having thrown out the Irish Home Rule Bill, and the circumstances under which it was so treated. The Franchise Law Amendment Bill as it stands is, your petitioners submit, so sweeping a measure, that no Indian who is not already on the Voters' List, no matter how capable he may be, can become a voter if the Bill becomes law. Your petitioners trust that your Hon. Council will not endorse such a view, and will, therefore, send the Bill back again to the Legislative Assembly for its reconsideration.[9]

This petition, too, like the telegrams earlier, was ruled out of order on the ground that it contained references to the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly. On July 4 the Bill was rushed through the second reading in the Legislative Council.

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As soon as they knew this, the Indians on July 5, addressed a second petition to the Council, the same being presented to the Honourable Council on the following day. Enumerating the anomalies and contradictions that would arise if the Bill came into operation, it pointed out that (a) the Bill arbitrarily kept on the voters' list those whose names were already there, while for ever shutting out the door against any new person who had not chosen to exercise the privileges hitherto though the latter might be in every way as qualified as or even better than the former, (b) though some Indian fathers could vote their children never could even though they might surpass the former in every respect, (c) it practically put the free and indentured Indians in the same scale, (d) it gratuitously assumed that India did not have at the time any Indian who was fit to exercise the privilege of franchise, and that there was such a wide difference between a European and an Indian that contact with the former, even for any length of time, did not fit an Indian for the exercise of the precious privilege, (e) the invidious distinction it made between one class of British subject and another was contrary to the letter and spirit of the royal proclamation of 1858 by which the British Government had solemnly bound itself "to the Natives of our Indian territories by the same obligations of duty which bind us to all our other subjects", and (f) if franchise was to be denied Indians on the ground that they did not enjoy that privilege in their own country the same ought to apply to persons coming from a country under a Monarchical system of Government, as for instance, Russia.[10]

On these grounds the petitioners reiterated the prayer for the appointment of a Commission of Enquiry to go into the question of the fitness or otherwise of the Indians to exercise the franchise and whether, if they were allowed to vote, there was any real danger of the European vote being swamped by the Indian.

This attempt fared no better than the earlier one, as in the meantime within one day of the second reading in the Council, the Bill had passed the Committee stage (July 5). When on July 6 the Honourable Mr. Campbell moved the postponement of the third reading of the Bill in the Council in order that the Indian petition might be considered, the motion was not carried on the ground that the petition had been presented *too late*.[11]

A motion to restrict the Civil Service wholly to persons of European descent was thrown out in the Committee stage during the same session of the Parliament only by the casting vote of Mr. Hulett, the Chairman of the Committee. The reason behind this small mercy, it transpired afterwards, was that if the "Asiatics" were at one and the same sitting refused the franchise, and also denied the opportunity of serving the Colony, however capable some of them might be, it would give rise to the impression "that a dead set was being made against

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these people, irrespective of political and social considerations".[12] Public opinion in England was very exercised over the plight of the Negroes in the United States, who had been left to their own resources after their manumission. An article in the *Review* had even asked whether "the whole anti-slavery battle will not have to be gone over again". The echoes of the controversy over the failure of the British Government to implement Herbert's Bill of 1893 in favour of holding simultaneous examinations in England and India for admission to the Covenanted Services (See page 115), also had reached the South African press, and given rise to an apprehension that exclusion of Indians from the Civil Services of the Colony would almost certainly have "a prejudicial effect on the minds of Imperial Ministers".[13] The relief proved temporary only. Even so it gave the Indian youth an opportunity to prove their worth.

In March, 1898, the first Indian to pass the Civil Services examination of the Colony, G. V. Godfrey, son of Subhan Godfrey, was presented an illuminated congratulatory address on his success at a function in the Congress Hall by the Indians of Durban.

3

The reaction of the Natal whites and the Natal press to this sudden upsurge of the spirit of resistance in a community that had lain dormant so long was one of near panic. One paper saw in, what it described as, the 'erruption' of 20 Arabs in the Strangers' Gallery in the Assembly on the occasion of the third reading of the Bill sprouting of the seeds of "sedition" of which the Premier had warned. Another paper in a paroxysm of anger against the Arabs who had with a "churlish" and "impudent air" retained their seats in the public gallery in the Natal Assembly and "refused to budge when a number of European ladies entered the gallery and sought for seats", regretted that "the eagle eye of the Serjeant-at-Arms" had not noticed "the dusky visitors", otherwise he would "doubtless have seen that proper respect was paid to the House by directing the Indians to remove their caps and turbans".[14]

The insertion in the Franchise Bill of the clause, that the Act would not come into force until Her Majesty's pleasure thereon was known, was regarded as ominous of rejection and it was suggested that the Ministers should be "interrogated" whether they had any correspondence in regard to it with the Home Government and the tenor of it.

At a loss for a reasoned refutation of the Indian case, the whites were driven to have recourse to casuistry. Referring to equal rights claimed by Indians as British subjects, the *Natal Mercury* propounded the novel theory that while Indians were British subjects in the sense that "flag will protect them from injustice and guarantee to them the purest

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and most righteous form of government that the world can give", to assume that these privileges extended to their receiving "equal political power with the inhabitants of a country associated with them by no ties of relationship" was to "reduce the term, sacred and honoured as it must and ever will be, to gross absurdity".[15] It conceded that "if the Indians in the Colony were all as well educated and as fully acquainted with our language and our institutions as Mr. Gandhi is" the aspect of the question would be "a totally different one", but argued that "Indians of his stamp are numerically few",[16] leaving unanswered the objection that the Bill made no exception even in respect of such Indians, however few. There was no escape from the fact that there *were* Indians in the Colony who had all the qualifications and fitness for the right to vote; that under the Royal proclamation they had been guaranteed equal treatment with all other British subjects; and that if they were discriminated against on the ground that they were "aliens", which they were not, the same argument would apply with equal if not even greater force in the case of Uitlanders in the Transvaal Republic. Ultimately, they were forced to drop even a pretence of justification on ethical or rational grounds and had to fall back on the naked assertion that the Europeans constituted the "dominant race" and their superior might entitle them to extraordinary privileges. While admitting that "altogether . . . the petitioners make out an excellent case for themselves", the influential Uitlanders' mouthpiece the *Star* of Johannesburg wrote:

> Natal . . . is a European Colony . . . and . . . to permit Indians to exercise the vote would be . . . to invite the ultimate extinction of the Caucasian as the dominant political factor. . . . The grounds on which the Ministry justifies itself are not dissimilar to those advanced by some of the friends of our own Government. *The essential difference between the two cases is that in Natal the disfranchised classes are Orientals, and in the Transvaal they are Westerns — a difference which the whole history of the world has shown to be a somewhat important one.*[17]

The scope for verbal argument, it seemed to Gandhiji, was for the time being exhausted. He must try to take the issue out of the barren sands of polemics on to a moral plane. The *Natal Mercury* had in its comments on the Indian petition maintained that Parliamentary Government was very different from any form of representation known to the village communities of India, and quoted in support of its contention Sir George Chesney's view in the *Nineteenth Century* that Indian village communities had nothing to do with political representation but only with the legal question of land tenure. Referring to it in a letter to the editor Gandhiji, while conceding that on the mundane plane every question was bound to have two sides to it, appealed to him to consider whether it would not serve humanity better if his

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paper tried to collect and hold up points of resemblance between Indians and Europeans instead of searching for and emphasising points of difference "often far-fetched or merely imaginary". It was easy enough to sow seeds of discord and animosity but a thing "far higher and far nobler" lay within its reach, "a thing that would bring you not only greatness but goodness and what is more, the gratitude of a nation that has not been crushed under 1,200 years' tyranny and oppression". That thing was "to educate rightly the Colony about India and its peoples",[18] who were bound by common ties to the British Crown, with a view to bringing them together instead of deepening the rift between the two.

The point went home. "We should be very sorry indeed to be the medium of sowing seeds of jealousy and animosity between the Indians and our own people," wrote the Natal Government's mouthpiece, but maintained that the Indians were themselves to blame for it; had they followed the habits and customs of the West, the problem would not have arisen. Even on its own showing this did not make out a case for laying a permanent statutory disability on all Indians. It was not irremediable. It left the door open for hope.[19]

Not all his attempts in this direction, however, were successful. An appeal to conscience in the case of the *Times of Natal* misfired completely. In an article captioned "Ramysammy" the *Times of Natal* had characterised the *Times of India*'s observations in the course of its comments on the Indian Petition to Lord Ripon on the ill-treatment of Indians in Natal as "mendacious rubbish". While admitting that "India among her teeming millions" without doubt possessed men of high culture, of great intellectuality, and of nobility of character, it had maintained that Indians in Natal were different and with possibly a few exceptions "totally unfit" for exercising the franchise, "even if they were of our kith and kin". In regard to the Indian objection that the proposed legislation put them beneath "the rawest African savage", it had suggested early action to disfranchise the Africans so as "to remove the anomaly to which the Indians have again drawn attention". So long as the Colonists wished to keep the Colony white, it concluded,

> encroachments of the Indians or Kaffirs on the political power of the whites should be promptly and firmly repelled. Every black man in the Colony receives the justice and protection extended to the white man, and we see nothing more that the black man can with reason expect.[20]

Pointing out in a letter to the editor what was obvious, namely, that the caption "Ramysammy" itself betrayed "a studied contempt" towards the poor Indian, Gandhiji appealed to the journal in all conscience to consider whether the whole article was not a "needless insult", and the reiteration of the determination to deny to the

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Indians equal political privilege with the whites while admitting that they possessed "men of high culture etc." a further aggravation of the original insult. "If you had thought that Indians were not cultured, but were barbarous brutes, and on that ground denied them political equality, there would be some excuse for your opinions. You, however, in order to enjoy the fullest pleasure derived from offering insult to an inoffensive people, must needs show that you acknowledge them to be intelligent people and yet would keep them under foot." Again, if a man sunk in the depths of ignorance and vice of the East End of London had the potentiality of becoming Prime Minister in free England, why should it be supposed that "the brothers and descendents of the same race whom you credit with intelligence" would, given the opportunity, "lack the potentiality of becoming as capable as their more fortunate brethren in India"?

It was a complete misinterpretation and travesty of the Indian position to suggest, Gandhiji protested, that they grudged the Africans their franchise or that it would give them any satisfaction if Africans were disfranchised likewise. "*The Indians do not regret that capable natives can exercise the franchise. They would regret (it) if it were otherwise. They, however, assert that they too, if capable, should have this right*" (Italics mine). Was it justice, was it consistent with the Christian doctrine to debar the Indians or the Natives from the precious privilege of the franchise under all circumstances because they had a dark skin, he asked. "You would look to the exterior only. So long as the skin is white; it would not matter to you whether it conceals beneath it poison or nectar. To you the lip-prayer of the Pharisee . . . is more acceptable . . .than the sincere repentance of the publican. And this, I presume you would call Christianity. You may, it is not Christ's."

The *Times of Natal* had claimed that "every black man in the Colony" received "the justice . . . extended to the white man". But was it not a fact, Gandhiji asked, that during the children's *fete*, that had recently been organised by the Mayor of Durban, not a single coloured child was to be seen in the procession? How did this square with the Master's exhortation: "Suffer little children to come unto me"? Or, would His disciples in the Colony "improve upon the saying by inserting 'white' after 'little' " ? He concluded with an entreaty:

> If He came among us, will He not say to many of us, 'I know you not'? . . .Will you ponder over your attitude towards the coloured population of the Colony? Will you then say you can reconcile it with the Bible teaching or the best British traditions? If you have washed your hands clean of both Christ and British traditions, I can have nothing to say. . . . Only it will then be a bad day for Britain and for India if you have many followers.[21]

Embarrassed inwardly by these home thrusts the *Times of Natal* tried to brazen it out by saying that the term "Ramysammy" had

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been used with regard to Indian immigrants "in the sense that 'Hodge' is employed to describe the least cultivated stratum of the British native", and "Mr. Gandhi, who is an English scholar" should have known this. Waxing indignant it dubbed Gandhiji's appeal as "offensive", and "abusive", an attempt to make "a parade of Christianity" and "to introduce himself as a champion of his fellow countrymen." It concluded with a Parthian shot: "Should the learned gentleman desire to address us again in a similar strain . . . he will save time by communicating directly with the advertising department of this journal".[22]

Gandhiji had by this time learnt to take this sort of experience as a part of the game. He was content to cast his bread upon the waters to find it after many days. If in the face of patient argument the opponent lost his temper, it was a sign that he had become aware of the weakness of his position and, once that happened, sooner rather than later his vehemence would lo its edge and he would be left with no legs to stand upon.

4

The Natal Council having declined to postpone further consideration of the Franchise Amendment Bill, the end of the third reading was a foregone conclusion. Nothing remained but to move the Secretary of State to advise the Crown to withhold the Royal Assent from the Bill. This meant that a part of their battle would now have to be fought in England. Gandhiji began to prepare for it.

To enlist the support from England the first essential thing was to establish contact with the British Committee of the Indian National Congress. A. O. Hume had conceived the idea of a campaign for the furtherance of Congress work in England as early as 1885. Firmly convinced that the British people desired fair play for India they, he impressed on the Indian leaders, would not fail to do justice once they understood the merits of their case. All that was necessary was to make a strenuous effort to induce them "to shake off the torper of an ignorant optimism".[23] But he soon found that no reform of any value could be expected from the official hierarchy at Simla. The impulse must come from England.

In England the coterie of European officials was all powerful. In a letter dated February 10, 1889, Hume pointed out to Congress leaders that the Government of India officials in England in consequence of

> service traditions and bureaucratic bias, as a body deny utterly the justice of our contentions, and are not to be convinced by anything that *we* can ever possibly say. . . . Our only hope lies in awakening the British public to a sense of the wrongs of our people.[24]

A permanent British Committee of the Congress in England would,

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therefore, have to be set up and provided with ample funds to carry on sustained propaganda for educating the British public opinion in regard to the Indian question.

As early as 1887 Dadabhai Naoroji, then residing in London, had volunteered to act as Agent for the Congress. But being engaged in business he could spare only a limited portion of his time. He was provided with no funds. He did whatever was possible for him single-handed with his limited means. A year later he was joined by W. C. Bonnerjee. Together they succeeded in enlisting the support of Charles Bradlaugh M.P. in the cause.

Subsequently a new agency was established under William Digby C.I.E., a retired British Indian official and author of that challenging, outspoken book *Prosperous British India.* Offices were taken at 25 Craven Street, Strand, and its rooms became the recognised repository of information concerning India, where Blue-books and Gazetteers relating to India, and leading Indian newspapers were made available to all persons interested in Indian affairs. Relations were established with the associations and organisations of both the great political parties in Britain and a systematic attempt was made to arouse British interest and enlist British effort in Indian affairs.[25]

To guide the operations of this agency and to keep watch over its accounts an influential committee was formed on July 27, 1889, consisting of Sir W. Wedderburn (Chairman), Dadabhai Naoroji, W.S. Caine M.P., the ardent Temperance worker, W.S. Bright, and McLaren M.P. with W. Digby as Secretary. The constitution of the Committee was confirmed by a resolution of the Congress in 1889 and a sum of Rs. 45,000 was voted for its maintenance. The Committee came officially to be known as "The British Committee of the Indian National Congress".

Subsequently the committee was enlarged by the addition of John Ellis M.P., George Yule, W.C. Bonnerjee, Sir Charles Schwann M.P., Sir Herbert Roberts M.P., D.G. Clark and Martin Wood. Of these John Ellis became Under Secretary of State for India in the Campbell-Bannerman Ministry in 1906.

Although Sir Wedderburn was the Chairman of the Committee the moving spirit behind it was Dadabhai Naoroji. But so unassuming and self-effacing was he by nature that when once a remittance on behalf of the Indian community in South Africa was sent to him as a contribution towards postal charges and general expenditure of the Committee to be forwarded to the Chairman, he returned the amount and suggested that they should remit this money and address communications intended for the Committee directly to Sir Wedderburn. He himself would render all possible assistance.

Member for Central Finsbury since 1892, Dadabhai's was a name to

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conjure with to every Indian in those far off days. The Indians in South Africa had been in touch with him since 1891. Having taken upon his young shoulders an onerous responsibility, Gandhiji felt that he must first seek the blessings of the Grand Old Man of India, whom he had worshipped from afar ever since his student days in England as the embodiment of political wisdom, self-sacrifice and single-minded devotion to the Motherland. In his first letter to that great patriot dated July 5, 1894, he wrote with his characteristic modesty:

I am yet inexperienced and young and therefore quite liable to make mistakes. The responsibility undertaken is quite out of proportion to my ability. I may mention that I am doing this without any remuneration. So you will see that I have not taken the matter up, which is beyond my ability, in order to enrich myself at the expense of the Indians. I am the only available person who can handle the question. You will, therefore, oblige me very greatly if you will kindly direct and guide me and make necessary suggestions which shall be received as from a father to his child.

Recapitulating the situation created by the Franchise Amendment Bill, he solicited his interest and help in the South African Indian community's struggle for self-respect and its elementary rights in the face of heavy odds:

I earnestly. . . appeal to you to use your influence . . . on behalf of the Indians. . . .The Indians look up to you as children to the father.[26]

5

The Bill passed the third reading in the Legislative Council on July 7. Determined to fight every inch of the ground, Gandhiji thereupon addressed a letter to the Governor (July 10, 1894) with seven other leading Indians requesting him to postpone sending his despatch on the Bill, which, they understood, he would be forwarding to the Home Government for Royal Assent, till he had received a petition to Lord Ripon, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, that they were preparing to be sent along with it. On the same day he again wrote to Dadabhai Naoroji to inform him that the Franchise Amendment Bill which had been passed had a proviso in it that it would not become law until, by a proclamation or otherwise, the Governor signified that it was not Her Majesty's wish to disallow it. With it he enclosed a copy of the petition to the Home Government which was expected to bear 10,000 signatures, of which 5,000 had already been obtained.

"I took considerable pains over drawing up this Petition," Gandhiji writes in his Autobiography. The particular point he made in it was that the very fact that such Indians as were already on the Voters' List were to be allowed to remain there at once disposed of the objection that Indians were not fit to exercise the right of franchise.

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Although it had not been openly acknowledged it had been tacitly admitted by the Natal Government that the exclusion of Indians could be justified on purely political grounds. It had been sought to be made out that if the Indians were allowed to vote their vote would swamp the European vote. How utterly groundless this fear was, was apparent from the fact that although the Indian population in the Colony was almost equal to the European there were only 251 Indians on the voters' roll as against 9,309 Europeans—the proportion between the two being of 1 to 38. Indians who came under indenture could not possibly have sufficient property qualification to be qualified for voting during their term of indenture and for many years afterwards, while those who came on their own means did not remain in the Colony for good but after a number of years returned home and were replaced by other Indians. The number of votes that the trading community commanded would thus remain more or less unchanged.

To allow the right of vote to those who were already on the Voters' List, while excluding their descendents from the privilege was, the Memorial pointed out, tantamount to giving with one hand to take away with the other. It had openly been said during the third reading of the Bill that whether the Clause 2, providing for this was "in" or "out", it did not make much difference, as these votes were bound to be extinguished before long.

Even more iniquitous and cruel was the exclusion for all time from the Franchise right of such Indians, together with their children, as had come under indenture and, having rendered invaluable service to the Colony, had on the completion of their full term of indenture settled down as free Indians.

The Bill was only the proverbial thin end of the wedge. The cry had already been raised that the Indians should be excluded from the Municipal Franchise also. If unequal treatment of Indians was allowed in Natal its effect would inevitably be to jeopardise the position of Indians in the other parts of South Africa as well and a time would soon come when it would be impossible for Indians with any sense of self-respect to remain there. It was prayed therefore that the British Government would not allow this unwarranted interference with the rights of one section of Her Majesty's subjects by another.

To obtain signatures of Indians from all over the province to this petition was no easy task, especially as it had been decided not to take a single signature without the signatory fully understanding the petition. Villages were scattered far and wide. The workers were all volunteers and altogether new to the task. But they threw themselves into it heart and soul. Sheths Dawud Muhammad, Rustomji, Adamji Miyakhan and Amad Jiva worked like Trojans. Nobody spared himself or thought of asking for even out-of-pocket expenses. Dawud Sheth went about in his carriage the whole day. His house was virtually

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turned into a public office and a caravanserai, where workers worked, slept and were even fed at his cost.

In the course of a fortnight about ten thousand signatures were thus obtained and on July 17, 1894, the Petition was duly submitted to the Colonial Secretary through the Governor. A thousand copies of the Petition were printed for distribution and circulation. Copies were sent to Sir William Wedderburn and other friends of India in England, and also to the press. *The Times* of London and the *Times of India* strongly supported the Natal Indians' plea. Characterising the Franchise Amendment Bill as "a singularly narrowminded and unconstitutional" act of policy, the *Times of India* strongly urged the Home Government to refuse to sanction a measure that was so "unjust, oppressive and retrograde".[27] For the first time public opinion in India and England became acquainted with the position of the Natal Indians.

A few days later Gandhiji in a letter to Dadabhai Naoroji wrote:

> Mr. Escombe, the Attorney-General, has made a report to the effect . . . that the only reason for passing the Bill is to prevent the Asiatics from controlling the Government of the Natives. The reason, however, is simply this. They want to put the Indians under such disabilities and subject them to such insults that it may not be worth their while to stop in the Colony. Yet they do not want to dispense with the Indians altogether . . . they want indentured Indians very badly; but they would require, if they could, the indentured Indian to return to India after his term of indenture. A perfectly leonine partnership! They know very well that they cannot do this at once—so they have begun with the Franchise Bill. . . .
>
> The scare about the Government of the "natives" passing from the Europeans to the Indians had been raised simply . . . to frighten the Home Government. . . . They do not want the Indians to elect white members—2 or 3—who may look after their interests in the Parliament, so that the Government may work their way towards the destruction of the Indians without any opposition whatever.[28]

* * *

The month of July was half through. The period of his extended stay in Natal was drawing to a close. The Memorial to Lord Ripon having been submitted Gandhiji felt that he could now perhaps return home. But when he asked leave to go the Indians, whom he had given a taste of combat, would not hear of it.

"You yourself told us," they importuned, "that the Franchise Amendment Bill was only the first step towards our ultimate extinction. Who knows whether the Colonial Secretary will return a favourable reply to our Memorial? We have enthusiasm, we have funds. If you go away, whatever has been done will go for nothing for lack of a guide. It is your duty to stay on."

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But how was this to be done? He had not the means. If he stayed there he must, he felt, reside in a good locality and in a style that, according to his notions at that time, would "reflect credit on the community". This could not be managed with anything less than £300 a year. At the same time he could not accept payment for public work. He could stay only if the Indian community guaranteed him legal work to the extent of that minimum.

When he mentioned this to his friends they said this was hardly necessary, they could easily provide him that much for his services, apart from what he might charge for legal work. But he was adamant. "My work would not involve the exercise on my part of much skill as barrister," he told them. "My work would be mainly to make you all work. And how could I charge you for that?"

They protested that if they wanted him to stay, it was but fair that they should find his expenses also. They knew he would not ask for more than his need.

Gandhiji told them it was their love and enthusiasm that made them say that. He had no doubt as to the genuineness of either, but how could they be sure that their love and enthusiasm would endure for ever? As far as he could see they would need enormous amounts to conduct their struggle. How could he ask them to empty their pockets for the cause if at the same time he wanted something from them for himself? "Besides," he finally added, clinching the argument, "as your friend and servant I might occasionally have to say hard things to you. Heaven only knows whether I should then retain your affection. But the fact is that I must not accept any salary for public work. I should regard even the fact of your giving me retainers as a reward of my public work."

The upshot of it all was that about 20 merchants gave him the retainers for one year for their legal work. Dada Abdulla found him a house and purchased him the necessary furniture in lieu of the purse that he had intended to give him on his departure. And so he settled in Natal.

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PART FOUR
THE MUFFLED CRY

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CHAPTER XVIII

"WITH THE HOUR CAME THE MAN"

1

PETITIONING BY itself, Gandhiji saw, was not going to take them very far. It would have to be backed by vigorous, sustained action. Public opinion in South Africa and outside would have to be mobilised and the colossal ignorance and prejudice that warped the thinking of the whites on the Indian question systematically tackled before their representation could have any effect on the Secretary of State for the Colonies. For this machinery of a permanent character would have to be set up.

Four days after Gandhiji's decision to settle down in Natal, the sponsors met in a preliminary meeting in Dada Abdulla's premises in West Street to consider the question and in a full meeting two days later. The spacious room on the first floor of Dada Abdulla's was packed to capacity by the cream of the Durban Indians. The name caused cogitation. The only political organisation, that Gandhiji knew of, was the Indian National Congress. The name, he was aware, stank in the English Conservative nostrils; but it would have been cowardice to fight shy of adopting it. It embodied India's highest political aspiration. It had been sanctified by the sacrifices of some of her noblest sons, whose names were enshrined in every Indian heart, and was nurtured on the dedicated service of veterans like Dadabhai Naoroji, whom he had admired and revered ever since he had met him as a student in London.

> I was therefore a Congress devotee, and wished to popularise the name. Inexperienced as I was, I did not try to find out a new name. I was also afraid of committing a mistake. So I advised the Indians to call their organisation the Natal Indian Congress.[1]

The gathering agreed with him to a man, and on August 22, 1894, the Natal Indian Congress was formally launched with Abdulla Haji Adam as President, Gandhiji as Honorary Secretary, and twenty-three prominent members as Vice-Presidents.[2] The rules were passed "amidst great enthusiasm".

As then defined, the objects of the Congress were:

> (1) to bring about a better understanding, and to promote friendliness between the Europeans and the Indians residing in the Colony,
>
> (2) to spread information about India and the Indians by writing to newspapers, publishing pamphlets, lecturing etc.,

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(3) to educate the Indians, especially the colonial born Indians, about Indian history, and induce them to study Indian subjects,

(4) to ascertain the various grievances the Indians were labouring under and to agitate by resorting to all constitutional methods for removing them,

(5) to enquire into the condition of the indentured Indians and to help them out of special hardships,

(6) to help the poor and needy in all reasonable ways, and

(7) generally to do everything that would tend to put the Indians on better footing morally, socially, intellectually and politically.

Unlike its Indian prototype, which till the nineteen-twenties met only annually, this Congress worked throughout the year. Most important of all, it had a regular membership register.

The condition of membership was set down as "sympathy with the objects of the Congress", and payment of subscription of at least 5s per month. But those who could afford more were invited to pay according to their capacity. All the leading members of the community joined. Seventy-six members subscribed on the spot. Abdulla Sheth headed the list with £2 per month. About half a dozen more paid similar amount. Gandhiji himself set down one pound per month and a considerable number besides him did the same. Ten members subscribed 20s and twenty-two 10s per month. Besides this, donations were offered and gratefully received.

Stirred as never before almost three hundred members were enrolled in the first month. They included Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, and Christians and were drawn from all the states that were represented in Natal. From the very start the emphasis was on quality rather than numbers. Gandhiji set his face resolutely against swelling the Congress roll by sterile membership. The names of those who failed to pay their subscription for three consecutive months or were absent from six consecutive meetings without valid reason were promptly struck off the list, leaving only effective members on the Congress register.

For the first time the South African Indians felt the impulse for public life. Meetings were held every month and even once a week if needed, when detailed accounts were presented and adopted. Questions of immediate concern to the community were discussed at these meetings, current events were reviewed and the proceedings duly recorded in the minute book. Members were encouraged to ask questions and suggest fresh subjects for consideration. To begin with they hesitated to stand up and speak in public, none of them having had that experience before. But once the rules of procedure, of which they had no idea, were explained they observed them and spoke briefly and to the point. As diffidence wore off, "many who had never been accustomed to speaking before an audience . . . acquired the habit of thinking and speaking publicly about matters of public interest."

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The meetings of the Natal Indian Congress were open to non-Indians. Such Europeans as were known to be sympathetic were invited as a token of the Congress desire to seek the goodwill and cooperation of all sections irrespective of race or religion. Only one European attended the Congress meetings in answer to the invitation. He was Mr Askew, solicitor and a Wesleyan preacher, who had come in close personal touch with Gandhiji. This far-sighted act of wisdom on Gandhiji's part proved to be the saving of the Natal Indian Congress when it found itself in grave peril in the following year.

Like every infant organisation the Congress had its crop of troubles. The principal one of these was in connection with the collection of subscriptions. The proportion of defaulters was high. Out of a possible income of £900 only some £500, or 59% was actually realised. Several remedies were tried. But none was wholly successful. Finally, it was decided to make the subscription annual instead of monthly, and payable in advance, the minimum being fixed at £3. Still another expedient to improve finances was to ask every merchant to put a voluntary levy of a farthing on each packet imported as a contribution to the Congress fund, "four packets of salt being counted as one". Nearly £195 were thus realised, though the amount should have been ten times that much if every merchant had paid.

To infuse enthusiasm, Gandhiji introduced door-to-door canvassing for membership and for the realisation of the arrears. Several prominent businessmen and workers accordingly volunteered and did the rounds at their own expense. Among them were Messrs Dawud Muhammad, Moosa, Haji Adam, Mohamed Casam Jeeva, Parsi Rustomji and Gandhiji. They travelled all over the Colony, unmindful of the inconvenience of the journey, over rough roads and under all conditions of weather.[3] The experience they gained was rich and rewarding.

Once at Tongaat their host, who was expected to contribute £6, would not give more than £3. Neither arguments nor entreaties had any effect. If they had accepted defeat it would have jeopardised their subsequent collections at other places. It was late in the night and they were all hungry. The co-workers were bursting with impatience, and could with difficulty restrain their anger. But Gandhiji kept at it with unruffled temper through the night. With the dawn the host yielded, gave £6 and also a feast to the workers. Every body felt happy. Both the workers and the host had an invaluable lesson burnt in upon them.

The success at Tongaat had its repercussions as far as Stanger in the coastal belt and Charlestown in the interior. The collection work served not merely to provide the "sinews of war", it became also a medium *par excellence* for training workers and imparting political education to the people. It served, too, to provide a sure measure of public support for the Congress.

The Congress carried on vigorous propaganda and publicity work

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in South Africa and abroad. In the course of the very first year nearly 1,000 letters were sent to friends of the Indians in England and India, and pamphlets on South African Indian problems were distributed. Two of these, "An Open Letter" and "An Appeal to Every Briton", had a far-reaching effect. We shall come to them later. Work was started among indentured Indians and legal assistance was provided in cases involving denial of justice, oppression or abuse of authority.

Appalling was the ignorance as to the religious practices, customs and social usages of the Indians even among the South African white intellectuals, not to mention their race prejudice. The Muslim population of Durban, for instance, used to celebrate the *Moharrum* festival as they did annually in India. But the whites, instead of realising its solemn significance, took it to be something like the carnival that follows the self-denials of Lent.

In May 1895 some Indians in Durban were arrested for "playing tom-toms on a Sunday to the annoyance of churchgoers". A European branded the arrests as a sign of intolerance. Signing himself as "SONNY" he told the readers of the *Natal Advertiser* that the tom-toms could hardly be heard by those inside any church in town. In any case they were not audible more than the noise of the vehicular traffic during the service. "I might suggest that the trams that rumble past the churches during service be fitted, for these occasions at least, with rubber tyres; but then they are run chiefly for European use, and possibly for the churchgoers' benefit. . . . The Indians' proceedings may appear absurd to us, but until we can assure ourselves of our own perfection and can offer them the means of attaining it also (which, of course, we would rather not, since that implies equality with ourselves, a possibility which their colour alone utterly precludes), we had better leave them to follow their own course."[4]

The protest was wholly lost on the Europeans. Next year 216 white rate-payers of Durban petitioned to the Durban Town Council to stop the celebration in contravention of its former decision on the ground that "tom-tomming", "tom-fooling" and "merry-making" that accompanied it made night "hideous" for many Europeans. Corporator Crart described it in the Town Council as "a drunken bout in which there was a great deal of rowdyism and filthy language". Even Henry Bale, who as a member of the Natal Assembly and practising barrister should have known better, referred to it as "a quite unnecessary . . . filthy and noisy exhibition". He had made enquiries, he added, and found that "it was not really a religious service at all. It was something connected with the death of Mahommed or Mahommed's son, or something of that kind". . . .[5]

The Congress, as soon as it came to know of this move, took up the matter. As a result the observance was not disallowed that year but was confined to a specified place by the side of the Umsindusi.

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Individually, these pin-pricks might seem of no consequence, but their cumulative effect was to make life intolerable for self-respecting Indians. They had so far endured it all in silence. They were weighed down by a benumbing sense of their utter helplessness. The mere fact that they could now stand up and fight put heart into them.

Simultaneously the Congress worked for reform from within. Indians were charged with being dirty and tight-fisted. Their houses were mere shanties. They slept where they traded. How could Europeans accustomed to creature comforts compete in trade with these parsimonious people who "lived on the smell of an oiled rag"? Feeling that nobody should be able to point the finger of scorn at them, Gandhiji had lectures delivered, debates held and suggestions made at Congress meetings on such subjects as personal hygiene, individual and corporate cleanliness and the advisability of having living apartments separate from trade premises. The well-to-do were advised to upgrade their living in consonance with their station in life. The proceedings were all conducted in Gujarati. No smoking was allowed at any committee meeting.

"Why should not you drive out in a coach like the Europeans?" he asked one of the Indian merchant princes.

"How dare we imitate the Europeans," the wealthy but timid trader replied in his broken English. In his sight the Europeans were "bosses".

"Every one of you is a boss," Gandhiji told him. "You must learn to feel like one."

The portly figure of this Sheth comfortably settled in his horse-and-carriage soon became a familiar sight in the fashionable quarters of Durban.

Gandhiji had the perspicacity to see even at this juncture that the future of the South African Indians largely depended on colonial born Indian educated youth. To prepare them to play their part and take their due share in public life, Gandhiji established the Natal Indian Educational Association under the auspices of the Natal Indian Congress. Mr Paul became its President and he himself its Secretary. It developed into a sort of debating society. Attached to it was a small library and reading room, where for nominal fee the members met and discussed matters of common interest, read papers and held debates. They also ventilated grievances.

The Association fostered in the children of ex-indentured Indians love for the mother country and a desire to acquaint themselves with its history, culture and rich spiritual tradition which was their glorious heritage and of which they should be proud. It also endeavoured to make them feel that free Indians regarded them as their own kith and kin, and to inculcate in the free Indians genuine respect for the former in their hearts. Soon the diverse elements began to coalesce and,

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fired with a sense of common purpose and unity among themselves and with India, began to function vigorously..

Gandhiji's stewardship stamped on the organisation and working of the Natal Indian Congress some revolutionary features that later became so closely associated with his name. A public activity, he felt, must be able to pay its way, otherwise it is a sign of something wrong either in its conception or in those conducting it which calls for a thorough overhaul or else its closing down. He had an innate abhorrence of conducting any public activity on borrowed money, and at the end of his term he was proudly able to say that the Natal Indian Congress had never been in debt.

He was likewise averse to having "more money at one's disposal than necessary". Some time later when its finances seemed to be in a prosperous condition, the Congress, at Gandhiji's suggestion, purchased property worth £1,080 to provide itself with a permanent fund. Rated at £200, it was leased and brought about £10 per month, enough to meet current Congress needs. To Gandhiji's mortification it gave rise to bickerings and disputes within the organisation, which at one stage endangered its very existence. The lesson he learnt was that funds should be raised as and when required to be spent and not to be hoarded. Too much money, or an assured income, is not good for an organisation that has for its object, not power but service of the people pure and simple for the realisation of the ideal of democracy.

> A public institution means an institution conducted with the approval, and from the funds, of the public. When such an institution ceases to have public support, it forfeits its right to exist. Institutions maintained on permanent funds are often found to ignore public opinion, and are frequently responsible for acts contrary to it.[6]

Scrupulous care in the use of funds was exercised. "Such economy," he afterwards wrote in his Autobiography, "is essential for every organisation, and yet I know that it is not always exercised. That is why I have thought it proper to enter into these details of the beginnings of a small but growing organisation."[7]

To set an object lesson in thrift and self-help, he had the receipt books, circulars, and reports, even notices of meetings etc., cyclostyled by clerks in his office after he had written them out in his own hand. Not a scrap of paper was thrown away. The side that remained blank served for scribbling. After both sides were covered, he had the sheets stitched. Into these scrap books he pasted press clippings. The record he thus kept makes thirteen volumes.

Every farthing spent was accounted for. Receipts were issued even if the donors did not ask for any. The expression "miscellaneous" was taboo in his balance sheets. A discrepancy of six pence in the annual statement of income and expenditure of the Natal Indian Congress for

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1894, which might well have been dismissed as venial by any other person, carries the following explanation:

> Thus, on comparing the deposits with the printed list, we have a difference of six pence. . . . This happens because one member once paid 2/6 and another time 3/-. The 3/- could not be well represented on the list.[8]

"Carefully kept accounts," he regarded as "a *sine qua non* for any organisation". "Without them," he wrote, "it falls into disrepute. Without properly kept accounts it is impossible to maintain truth in its pristine purity."[9]

Finding Congress members deplorably lacking in discipline and punctuality, he instituted a system of fines. Latecomers had to pay a fine of five shillings for each offence. Fines were collected from many members before the practice fell into disuse.

Of even more fundamental importance was the pains he took to save the Indian community from the "habit of exaggeration" and teach it to turn the searchlight inward.

> Attempts were always made to draw their attention to their own shortcomings. Whatever force there was in the arguments of the Europeans was duly acknowledged. Every occasion, when it was possible to cooperate with the Europeans on terms of equality and consistent with self-respect, was heartily availed of.[10]

Explaining the importance of these little things in the context of his subsequent non-violent struggle, he writes: "I have deliberately entered into all these details, for without them the reader cannot realise how Satyagraha spontaneously sprang into existence and how the Indians went through a natural course of preparation for it."[11]

What a hotch-potch of the big and the small, what a sin against proportion, an impatient reader might be tempted to exclaim. That would, however, only be to betray his ignorance of the way non-violence works and its power is built.

In assessing Gandhiji's work we have to remember that he had to work with the lowliest of the low—for the most part indentured and ex-indentured labourers. The most heartless, degrading labour system ever devised by selfish greed had all but crushed them. To evoke the infinitesimals of power latent in such a mass and to use the same to the best advantage he needed to concentrate with all his being on the homely, insignificant looking things that made up the sum of their lives. It called for inexhaustible patience and a faith that is affected by no outward circumstance, unflagging perseverance, and perfection in the littlest of little things of life.

The Indian community was a dispirited, disorganised mass. Before the first twelve months had run out it began to throb with fresh vigour. Branches of the Congress were established in ten places, besides

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Durban, at Pietermaritzburg, Howick, Isipingo, Charlestown, Umsinga, Pinetown, Stanger, Estcourt, Tongaat, and Verulum. Membership mounted up to 228. Subscriptions aggregated annually to £900 of which some £535 were realised. With the donations receipts totalled £616.

This would have been regarded as a highly creditable achievement even for the whites in South Africa of the eighteen-nineties. But it was not in Gandhiji's nature to rest on his oars. The first annual report of the Congress closed with an appeal for £2,000 at least, to place their organisation on a firm foundation. A few weeks later, when an appeal was made for double that amount, it caused a flutter even in the dovecots of the Natal Parliament.

The Transvaal also had its Defence of India League—an organisation similar to the Natal Indian Congress. So had Cape Town. Differing slightly in their constitutions from the Natal Indian Congress and from one another, they carried on activities and worked more or less on identical lines.

2

A fortnight after the inauguration of the Congress Gandhiji applied to the Natal Supreme Court for admission as an advocate. The Attorney-General generally presented such applications without charging any fee. Harry Escombe, who had been the legal adviser to Dada Abdulla and Co., being approached by Gandhiji, gladly consented. Mr Morcom, the ex-Attorney-General, supported it. But a few days before the actual presentation the Law Society of Natal served Gandhiji with a notice opposing it. When the regulations for the admission of advocates had been drawn up, it pleaded, the possibility of a coloured man being admitted had not been contemplated.

Unlike the Bench of Natal which was held in high respect, because its occupants could measure up against any who wore the ermine in any other possession of the Crown, the Natal Bar, at the turn of the century was, with a few exceptions that could be counted at one's finger ends, a body of undistinguished mediocrities whose knowledge of law, legal ability or educational standing was not such as to invite comparison. Afraid of bread being taken out of the mouth of the white confraternity of legal practitioners, it had been trying to convert itself into a close corporation. To that end it now set out to invoke colour prejudice. The Colony had been built largely by European enterprise and money, it argued, Europeans therefore should predominate in the higher professions. The Natal Constitution, however, being as yet non-racial, this ground could not well be openly advanced. So the Society put in the forefront the objection that the original English certificate had not been attached to the application.

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The distinguished lawyer, whom the Society had engaged to support its opposition, also being professionally connected with Dada Abdulla & Co., sent for Gandhiji. Gandhiji explained to him that the certificate had been deposited in the original with the Bombay High Court at the time of enrolment there. But he had the Registrar's certificate of admission bearing Mr A. H. Farrell's signature. He also had two certificates of character as required by the regulations, obtained from Europeans. This he did in the belief that in the prejudice-ridden Colony a certificate by a European would carry more weight than any he might secure from his own nationals. To his amazement the Society's lawyer objected to this procedure. "What do they know about your antecedents?" he asked. "What can be the extent of their acquaintance with you?"

"But here everyone is a stranger to me," Gandhiji answered. "Even Sheth Abdulla came to know me here."

"True. But then he belongs to your home town, and if your father was Prime Minister there, he is bound to know your family. If you were to produce an affidavit by Dada Abdulla, I should have absolutely no objection."

Gandhiji knew that if he had done just that, the certificate would have been rejected and he would have been asked to produce one from a European. Besides, what had his admission to practise as an advocate to do with his birth or family? With some difficulty he restrained himself from giving vent to his wrath. Instead of demanding to know what authority the Law Society had to require all those details, he signified his readiness to meet the council's wish for the affidavit.

This being done, the counsel said he was satisfied. But the Society insisted upon the original English certificate from the Inner Temple. When it pressed for it in the Supreme Court, the Chief Justice pointed out that the applicant had sworn that he was admitted. Mr Greene, the counsel on behalf of the Society, nevertheless persisted.

"Is the applicant (Gandhiji) being tried for perjury?"[12] demanded his Lordship.

Sir Walter Wragg of the Bench admitted the validity of the objection on strictly technical ground but favoured the granting of the application as he believed the applicant's statement. His colleague, Justice Turnbull, on the other hand, said that "it was the first time he had heard about the certificates being presented". The Chief Justice cited Letters Patent issued in appointing a Queen's Counsel, "and Her Majesty was pleased to admit that he was a barrister without any certificate".[13] Without even calling upon the Attorney-General to reply he ordered: "Mr Gandhi, you can now take the oath."

Gandhiji stood up and took the oath before the Registrar and thought it was all over. But as soon as he was sworn in, the Chief Justice drawing attention to his head-dress, which was that of the Bombay

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High Court, said: "Mr Gandhi, you must now remove your turban. Being an advocate of the Natal Court you must, while in it, conform to the rules of the Court with regard to the dress worn by practising barristers."

Though on his first appearance in the court in Natal Gandhiji had chosen to walk out rather than comply with the direction to take off his turban, he felt that in this instance there was some substance in the dictum: "In Rome do as the Romans do". He immediately bared his head, bowed low to their Lordships and left.

> Not that, if I had resisted the order, the resistance could not have been justified. . . . But I saw my limitations. . . . I wanted to reserve my strength for fighting bigger battles. I should not exhaust my skill as a fighter in insisting on retaining my turban. It was worthy of a better cause.[14]

Several of his friends, including Dada Abdulla, disagreed with this stand. "It would be right to refuse," he explained to them, "if an Indian or English judge or officer ordered you to take off your turban; but as an officer of the court, it would have ill become me to disregard a custom of the court in the province of Natal."

They failed to agree. But Gandhiji was satisfied that in the circumstances his decision was correct. "Looking at a thing from a different standpoint in different circumstances" became the basis of his philosophy of truth and non-violence. "The very insistence on truth," he subsequently wrote, "has taught me to appreciate the beauty of compromise." And again, "I saw in later life that this spirit was an essential part of Satyagraha. It has often meant endangering my life and incurring the displeasure of friends. But truth is hard as adamant and tender as a blossom."[15]

The Society's attempt to prevent Gandhiji from practising in the Natal courts brought upon it unmitigated censure and ridicule. The *Natal Mercury* described the objection lodged by it as looking "uncommonly like a lawyer's quibble", since "if the copy certificate produced by Mr Gandhi is not genuine, the Law Society has a ready remedy, and can very easily get the necessary proofs."[16] It asked whether the Society would have troubled itself in the same way in regard to the non-production of an original certificate from the Inner Temple, if Mr Gandhi had been an European.

The *Star* of Johannesburg commented that the Society had certainly not "added lustre to its somewhat doubtful prestige" by its "disingenuous" attempt to exclude from practising before the High Court of the Colony "Mr Gandhi, who like Dadabhai Naoroji, M.P., is what Lord Salisbury would call a 'black man' (See page 128), (and who as) a member of the Inner Temple . . . is . . . in all probability very much better qualified to practise than the vast majority of . . . his local colleagues".[17] The new little Colony of Natal would find it impossible, it

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warned, to adopt a policy which had long been discarded in "every other part of the Empire".

The most searing criticism came from the *Natal Witness*. It reminded the Society that its members were not admissible to practise even in the neighbouring Colony, that the Cape did not recognise their professional standard, either as advocates or attorneys, and that in Griqualand West, even when it was a separate province, a Natal advocate could only practise as an attorney. "When the status of a society or an individual is not quite assured, the most foolish thing that either can do is to draw attention to itself or himself," it observed. Colour was stated to be an objection but "*auri sacra fames* (the accursed thirst for gold)" was really "at the bottom of it". Criticising the Society for its sordid pettiness which made it look "so absurd and contemptible", with withering irony it concluded:

> It is, no doubt, sad that the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge and the Inns of Court should be so heedless in dignity and self-respect as to welcome within their gates intellect from wherever it may come, and be ready to give of their best to the men who possess it. It is sad to reflect that in the great Parliament of the Empire the place of birth, and the colour of a person, present no obstacle to a man becoming a legislator; and to think that a constituency in the Capital and heart of the Empire should have so demeaned itself as to have chosen as its representative an Indian barrister. It is painful to think that the young South African cricketers should have been exposed to contamination by having opposed to them in the field an Indian graduate of Cambridge. All this is very sad, but there is a silver lining to every cloud, and though the freedom to commit wrong is still under restraint, there is still some hope left for a benighted world. 'I, even I only, am left,' was the cry of the prophet of old, but there came the answer that there were still seven thousand left in Israel who had not bowed the knee to a false god; and so, too, though the ancient Universities, the Parliament of the Empire, English constituencies, the Inns of Court, and the Schools of Medicine have all been smitten with colour-blindness and have bowed the knee to the false god of 'intellectual equality', there is still a Natal Law Society which is untainted with a false philosophy, and which keeps alive the bright flame of bigotry and prejudice.[18]

"The attempt of the Natal Law Society to keep him (Mr Gandhi) out of the courts," wrote a Cape paper, "will be a capital advertisement for him. It is, of course, quite within the range of possibility that he may become a judge in Natal, and it may be hoped that his influence among his fellow countrymen will be for good. They are strong enough, no doubt, to send him to Parliament."[19]

A few days later Gandhiji made his debut by appearing on behalf of the plaintiff in a civil action before Mr Dillon, the Assistant Resident Magistrate. The plaintiff, Dada Abdulla, claimed £263 from a

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Gopi Maharaj for goods sold and cash advanced. Opposing him was Mr Robinson of Messrs Farman and Robinson. The Court admitted the claim with costs. The *Natal Advertiser* congratulated Gandhiji on winning his first case.[20]

3

Soon Gandhiji was established at the Natal Bar. He was painstaking and thorough in studying facts. His fellows regarded him as a sound lawyer, and Magistrates and judges respected his legal acumen, intellectual vigour, and clarity of judgment.

A legal skirmish that he had with one of the Supreme Court judges early in 1895 made headlines in the press. One Hassanji Dawji dying intestate, the Chief Justice suggested that Gandhiji should be requested to frame a plan of distribution according to the Mahomedan Law. This was done and the Master recommended the adoption of the plan. Mr Tatham applied to the Supreme Court for confirmation of the Master's report. Sir Walter confirmed the report as far as the widow's portion was concerned, but ordered that the portion, which Gandhiji had stated should go to the children and the brother of the deceased, should be paid directly into the hands of the Master. The brother, he laid down, would be entitled to it only after he could show that he represented the poor. "Mr Gandhi," His Lordship remarked,

> knows nothing of Mahomedan Law. He is as great a stranger to Mahomedan Law as a Frenchman. For what he has stated he would have to go to a book as you would; of his own knowledge he knows nothing.

Gandhiji had had the acumen to differentiate between the provisions in the Muslim Law for almsgiving (*Zakat*) and that for inheritance. Mr Tatham protested. A plan of distribution had been obtained from the priests and from Mr Gandhi. They had exhausted all the expert evidence available in the Colony. Where else were they now to go? he asked.

> Sir Walter Wragg: The portion which Mr Gandhi states should go to the brother of the deceased, should, according to Mahomedan Law, go to the poor. Mr Gandhi is a Hindoo, and knows his own faith, of course, but he knows nothing of Mahomedan Law.
>
> Mr Tatham: The question is whether we shall take Mr Gandhi's view or the priest's.
>
> Sir Walter Wragg: You must take the priest's.[21]

The estate as a result could not be wound up and, as the *Natal Advertiser* put it, the strong probability appeared to be that "the lawyers will have the whole of the oyster".[22]

The decision that in an intestate estate the natural heirs of the

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deceased lost all right of inheritance prescribed in the *Koran* raised an issue of far reaching importance to the Moslem population of the Colony. Gandhiji considered it subversive of the Mahomedan Law of inheritance and felt compelled to challenge it.

Joining issue with Sir Walter, he wrote in the *Natal Witness* of March 23, 1895, that the decision of the Supreme Court was based upon an erroneous view of the Mahomedan Law and would vitally affect a large portion of the Indian colonists. The *dictum* that only a Mahomedan should know the Mahomedan Law and not a non-Mahomedan could hardly bear examination: "Were I a Mahomedan, I should be very sorry to be judged by a Mahomedan whose sole qualification is that he is born a Mahomedan. It is a revelation that the Mahomedans know the law intuitively, and that a non-Mahomedan never dare give an opinion on a point of Mahomedan Law."

It was likely, he ventured to suggest, that when his Lordship spoke about inheritance he had almsgiving in mind "which is incumbent upon every Mahomedan". It was certainly an article of their faith but the principle that guided almsgiving did not obtain in cases of distribution of inheritance.

A Mahomedan, by giving alms during his lifetime, earns for himself heaven or a respectable place therein. Alms given out of his estate by the State after his death can surely do him no spiritual good, because it is not *his* act. After a Moslem's death it is the relatives who have a prior, nay exclusive, claim upon his estate.[23]

Citing chapter and verse from the *Holy Koran*, the Mahomedan Law of Inheritance and commentaries thereon by eminent jurists he showed that the plan of distribution that His Lordship had invalidated, in every respect accorded with the injunction of the *Holy Koran* and the provisions of the Moslem Law of Inheritance:

But the report says that the priest and I differ. If you eliminate the 'I' and put 'the law' instead (for I simply said what the law was), I would venture to say, the priest and the law should never differ, and if they do, it is the priest and not the law that goes to the wall. In this case, however, the priest and I do not differ if the distribution in the report sent to me by Mr Tatham was the one approved by the priest, as it seems to have been, according to his letter of advice. The priest says not a word about the half-brother taking as representing the poor.

To make assurance doubly sure, however, he added, he had conferred with some Mahomedan gentlemen who "ought to know the law according to Sir Walter", and they were as surprised as he himself when he told them about the decision. "They, without even taking time to consider — the thing appeared to them so plain and clear — said, 'The poor never take anything from an intestate estate. The half-brother

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as such should have his share'."

He reminded Sir Walter that it was a non-Mahomedan who had edited the book on Mahomedan Law which was described by Messrs Binns and Mason in their report published after their return from India as "one of the best on that law" viz., Macnaghten's "Mahomedan Law"; and concluded:

The decision then, I submit, is contrary to the Mahomedan Law, the priest's opinion, and (that of) other Mahomedan gentlemen. It will be a manifest hardship if the portions rightly belonging to the relations of a deceased Mahomedan are to be locked up until they can show that 'they represent the poor'—a condition never contemplated by the law or sanctioned by Mahomedan usage.[24]

The consensus of opinion in Natal legal circles was that in the duel with the Indian barrister Sir Walter had had the worst of the argument. "Junius" wrote in the *Natal Mercury*:

It seems to be the fashion . . . to sit on Mr Gandhi himself. I should like even at this late hour, to raise my feeble protest against the rather 'hoity-toity' remarks indulged in by the judge in a recent case, to the effect that Mr Gandhi knew nothing of Mahomedan Law, that he was as ignorant of Mahomedan Law as a Frenchman, that whatever knowledge he might have of it (*sic*) he would have obtained from books, and that of his own knowledge he knew nothing. . . . I fancy if the learned Judge were stripped of all the knowledge he had got from books he would appear legally and intellectually rather naked. Then why should not a Frenchman know Mahomedan Law, and why should not Mr Gandhi, and why *should* the learned Judge? Whence does he himself derive his knowledge of that law which is sufficient to enable him to deliver his *ipse dixit* upon a matter whereon he seems to think nobody but a Mahomedan can give an opinion? Is it from the derided source, or does it spring from his 'own knowledge'?[25]

This was only the beginning. His reputation continued to grow. Later in an insolvency case, when he carried his point against his legal adversary R. H. Tatham, Tatham good humouredly exclaimed amid laughter in the court: "Gandhi's supreme. . . . The triumph of black over white again!" [26]

4

Pin-pricks, persecution and harassment were the daily lot of the South African Indian. Even the tallest never knew when, on stepping out of his house, he might be assaulted by a white rowdy, challenged and marched to gaol by a policeman or subjected to one indignity or another by the general European population. The law in most cases provided little protection. To cite a few instances. During the Christmas

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of 1895 a gang of whites set fire to the Indian stores in Field Street, causing damage. Lead bullets, shot from a sling into another Indian store, resulted in a customer nearly losing an eye. Both these matters were reported to the Superintendent of Police. He promised to do all he could. But with the best will in the world, the poor official could do nothing — so universal and deep were popular prejudice and hatred against the Indians. Inspired by the race feeling, his own subordinates did little to trace the culprits. The constables at the police station, to whom one of the aggrieved Indians applied, laughed at him and asked him to have a warrant issued first from the Magistrate for their arrest.

To bring the offenders to justice was both troublesome and costly. Nor could the result be foretold. As likely as not the offender would either be discharged with a caution or with a fine of five shillings or prison for a day. On coming out of the witness box, his malice whetted, he would pursue the complainant with jeers added to threats, making his lot even worse than before. Publication of such incidents served only to incite others to similar behaviour.

Harassment took many forms. Abdulla Haji Adam, a ship-owner and one of the leading members of the Indian trading community, was once travelling with Gandhiji as far as Krantzkloof Station, twenty-three miles from Durban. When he alighted he could get no room in the hotel. No one would even sell him bread. He had no alternative but to lie down on a bench. Weary and hungry, he shivered the night long in the winter cold which is pretty severe in South Africa.

In some ways the shabbiest exhibition of ill-will occurred in Durban. Parsi Rustomji was a merchant prince, famed for his munificent support to philanthropic causes that had made his name a household word not among the Indians only. Prescribed Turkish baths for an ailment from which he suffered, he went to the public baths. Though these were owned by the Durban Corporation and Rustomji paid his rates as well as any other white, he was brusquely turned away.

Apart from doing legal work for his clients, who gave him retainers, Gandhiji devoted all his time and talent solely to fighting in law courts the battles of fellow Indians, who were labouring under various disabilities — both legal and extra-legal. For services rendered in their grim struggle for self-respect, he expected and received no remuneration. It was purely a labour of love.

Reference has already been made to Law 15 of 1869 (See page 310) under which no "coloured" person could leave his house after 9 o'clock at night unless he had a pass signed by some one, showing that he was out under instructions or could give "a good account of himself". Originally this applied to the Africans only. How it was extended to "coolies" as "coloured persons" has an astonishing history.

Before 1869 the term "coolie" was used in some 8 or 9 Indian Immigration laws. In the preambles of these it was clearly stated that

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"coolies" were persons who under those laws had been introduced into the Colony at the public expense or by private individuals for particular service which was also regulated by the law. When the laws were consolidated "the coolie" was turned into "coolie immigrant". So it continued till 1891, when the expression, "coolie" was carefully left out, and only "Indian Immigrant" remained. In one section of the Law of 1891 "descendents" of an "Indian Immigrant" were gratuitously tacked on to a person thus introduced. "Asiatics" or "Arabs" who had not been so introduced were carefully excluded. A "free Indian" i.e. *an indentured Indian who afterwards became free was thus brought within the meaning of that law, as also his descendants, but not Indians who had come independently and at their own cost.*

This distinction was forgotten or more likely ignored, and the word "Indian Immigrant" used in the law was taken to cover all Indians who had come to the Colony and settled there, with the result that a "coloured" man could not feel secure, even if he stirred out in pursuit of his legitimate vocation, after hours. To instance: In January 1895 nineteen Indian hawkers were charged in the Borough Court Durban with being in the borough before daylight without passes. At 2 A.M. they were found resting on the Bulwer Road, with baskets of fruit and vegetables. Ordered by "native" constables to repair to the police station, they in mortal terror refused to move until dawn. At the police station they were released on a bail of five shillings each. Produced before Mr Dillon, the Magistrate, they stated that they were on their way from Bellair to the market near the Mosque in Grey Street, having walked long distances to obtain their supplies from wholesalers. Their counsel asking for their discharge argued that the law allowed coloured persons to be out before daylight, provided they could give "satisfactory explanation". Their statement that they were proceeding to the market sufficed to justify them. To arrest men lawfully going to market was sheer persecution. The Magistrate upheld the plea and discharged them.[27] But the poor fellows lost two days' prospective earnings from the loads they were carrying on their heads. They were detained in gaol for the two days that the case was proceeding and had to pay the attorney's fees into the bargain. "A fitting reward," as Gandhiji put it, "for being up and doing early in the morning," and "for industry".

A few months later a prominent Durban Indian, "a well-educated and exceedingly intelligent man", who had property in various parts of the town, went with his mother at night to Sydenham, where also he had property. Two "native" constables took them into custody and marched them off to the police station. The trooper in charge of the station languidly listened to the explanation that the man gave. In bidding him "to be gone", he administered a warning that next time he was caught without a pass he would be detained and prosecuted. Scandalised, the *Natal Mercury* wrote:

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Had the police been hasty-tempered, and supposing the trooper in charge of the station had happened to be away, . . . these highly respectable Indians would probably have been roughly treated and then ignominiously cast into the cells. . . . Being a British subject in a British Colony he (the young Indian) objects to being treated in this way. . . . He makes a strong point . . . and one which the authorities should certainly consider. . . . Most people know Mr Gandhi. . . . No one can deny his education, training and abilities, yet he is liable to exactly the same indignity as . . . (this Indian) and over them both the long-robed so-called Arabs have advantages. A pretty commentary on our civilisation, is it not?[28]

True, the police were supposed to exercise discretion in favour of "Arabs", proclaimed as such by their flowing Indian dress. But not all "passenger immigrants", as Indians who were not indentured were called, nor ex-indentured labourers or their descendants wore the Arab dress. Non-Muslims did not. Being a most sensitive lot, the Indian Christian youth had adopted the English dress. They felt most keenly the edge of the law.

On the night of January 27, 1896, A. M. Pillai, Superintendent of the Coolies' depot, Addington, was on his way home. Challenged by a European constable at Prince Alfred Street, he produced a pass issued by the Mayor, which permanently exempted him from the operation of the Pass Law. On examining it, the constable muttered something. Unable to follow Pillai said, "What?" Caught by the scruff of the neck he was pushed. Taken aback he asked what he had done to be treated like that. A second time he was manhandled. Threatened that if he did not clear out, he would be locked up, he went to the police station and complained of assault. The next morning he made his deposition to the Protector of the Immigrants.

The school teacher, who had accompanied Pillai on the night of the assault, corroborated this in the court of Captain Lucas, Resident Magistrate. Denying the charge the defendant deposed that the complainant had been very "cheeky". The Magistrate disbelieving the statement sentenced the constable to £1 fine or one week's imprisonment.[29]

Despite this the abuse of the Vagrant Law continued. Towards the close of December 1895 two "well-dressed respectable looking" young Indian Christians "in European dress and speaking faultless English", John Lutchman Roberts and Samuel Richards—both children of ex-indentured Indians — were charged with being out at night at 9-30. One of them was a school master, the other a candidate for the Civil Service, who studied under Gandhiji. Produced before Mr Waller, they stated that they had been out for a walk and were just returning home when they were arrested and locked up for the night. In the morning bail was accepted from one of them, but refused to the other, who on making a

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deposit was let off. They pleaded that their looks were sufficient guarantee for their respectability.

During the trial one of them stated on oath that, when he gave the name of Samuel Richards, the sergeant laughed at him.

Superintendent: How long have you had that name?—Eighteen months; since I was converted.

What were your parents?—Indentured Indians; father's a *dhoby*.

. . . .

Superintendent: Since your family name was not good enough for you, did you inform the police that you had taken an English name that would excuse you from Indian laws?—No.

Superintendent: (to the other man Roberts) Who were your parents? —Indentured Indians.

Why should a constable pass you any more than your parents?—My face is sufficient.[30]

Appearing for the defence, Gandhiji contended that the men had a perfect right to be out. Thoroughly respectable lads, they had given a good account of themselves. One of them was known to the police. On a previous occasion under similar circumstances, he had been advised by the Magistrate to obtain the Mayor's exemption and would have done so had not illness prevented him.

The Magistrate after commenting on the facts of the case said he was satisfied with the explanation that they were merely taking a walk and were not vagrants. Gandhiji submitted that it should not be necessary for a person, who could give "a good account of himself", to procure the Mayor's pass of exemption that the Magistrate had recommended, but in deference to the Magistrate's wish he advised the clients to obey. The first defendant accordingly applied for the Mayor's pass but was informed by the Town Clerk that a pass would not be issued to him, "a clerk and Sunday School teacher, having never been charged with any criminal offence".[31]

Mr Waller's verdict, amounting as it did, "to a departure in the administration of the law as applied to Indians",[32] aroused a great deal of interest in the press. Describing the case as "what will probably be a test case" the *Natal Mercury* commented, "Every one will admit that this law presses harshly on many people".[33]

Winning cases in law courts alone, Gandhiji realised, would not help his people. To win the battle he must win the goodwill of the authorities for law and order. At the conclusion of the case, therefore, he appealed to the police to become "a little more charitable and considerate" towards the Indian community. The police was not above making mistakes. The Vagrant Law would cease to be oppressive if the police would have some consideration for the Indians and use discretion in arresting them.[34]

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Unfortunately the police superintendent, smarting under the fine imposed on one of his constables in the Pillai case and perhaps impelled by his sense of loyalty to his men to stand by them, made a personal issue of it. An *ex parte* version appeared in the *Natal Mercury* of the case in which the two lads were stigmatised as "young upstarts" who "elected to be locked up all night in preference to obtaining release on bail". The Magistrate's decision was made to appear as a miscarriage of justice. "This will give the public a fair idea," the police chief remarked,

of what things are coming to. . . . A few days ago Capt. Lucas fined a European constable £1 for assault because he took a coolie by the shoulders who refused to show his pass. . . . Now the Indian, Roberts, a mere lad, ignoring the magistrate's order to get a pass, . . . has the audacity to parade our main street after hours. . . . Was it with the intention of putting another constable in the same position as the former? . . . The police were on their guard and saw the trick. . . .

In regard to Gandhiji's appeal to the police to be a little lenient to the Indians,

I replied that . . . they (the police) had never interfered with Arab merchants or other respectable coloured men at night, but how on earth are they to know what is in a man's pocket, or who has a pass unless he shows it. . . . If an Indian is permitted to evade the law by changing his religion and his name, I am afraid we shall have the whole population doing the same.[35]

Why, Gandhiji asked in the *Natal Mercury*, should the fact that the lads were sons of indentured Indians go against them — this "especially in an English community", which judged a man's worth on merits and not on birth? Was not a butcher's son honoured by them "as the greatest poet"? Making much of the changing of the name about two years ago, the Superintendent had tried to excuse the wanton insult to which the young man was subjected by the constable who arrested him. But that could not, Gandhiji pointed out, exculpate the constable who knew nothing whatever as to when the name was changed,

and surely his (the Indian lad's) very features were sufficient to betray his nationality had he attempted, as the Superintendent supposes he did, to cover his nationality in order to escape the operation of the Vagrant Law. Nor did he seem to be ashamed of his name or birth, for the answers came almost simultaneously with the questions as to birth and name, and seemed so much to please the amiable Superintendent as to extort the following expression from him: 'Yes, my boy, if all were like you, the police would have no difficulty'.[36]

Again, how could there be anything absolutely wrong in changing one's name, unless it was wrong to change one's religion? "Mr Quilliam

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has become Haji Abdullah and Mr Webb, the late Consul-General of Manica, has adopted a Mahomedan name, on adopting the Mahomedan faith", and no one in the Colony had thought anything of it. But in the constable's view not only the Christian name but also the adoption of even the Christian dress was "an offence for an Indian. . . . And now, according to the Superintendent's view, change of religion would render an Indian liable to suspicion".[37] There was no reason why this should be so, Gandhiji submitted, unless it was presumed that the change was a result not of "honest belief" but a "dodge" to evade the law. "In the present case . . . both the defendants are honest Christians, because . . . both are respected by Dr. Booth."[38]

He admitted that it was difficult to tell "whether a man is an honest Christian or a Satan in . . . Christian garb", but in case of doubt, he maintained, the "benefit of the ordinary presumptions should be given to the Indians" as was given to other classes, even when they were suspected to be criminals.

> May I plead for the same treatment in cases like that of the unfortunate boys? Instead of the cell they might have been given some other place to lie in. They might have been given clean blankets to lie on if the cell could not be avoided. The constable might have spoken to them kindly. Had this been done the case would never have come before the Magistrate.

Taking strong exception to the Superintendent's remark that the "young upstarts elected to be locked in prison the whole night in preference to bail", Gandhiji pointed out that the reverse was the truth.

> They offered bail and it was refused during the night. . . . They renewed their request to be bailed out in the morning. The request of the second defendant was granted. The constable refused to bail out the first. Against his name was marked 'not to be released'.[39]

As a matter of fact the book containing that remark was actually produced in the court. But this, as "Spectator" pointed out in the columns of the *Natal Advertiser*, was actionable. No wonder that "the Magistrate declined to record this in his note book", and remarked that "he was not going to allow any action against the Corporation".[40]

The Superintendent had claimed that his force had never interfered with "the Arab Merchants and other respectable coloured men at night". Referring to it Gandhiji asked, whether the two boys in question were not to be ranked among "other respectable men"?

> I appeal to him and entreat him to consider well whether he himself would have arrested these two boys. I say in his own words, "if his whole force were as considerate and amiable as himself there would be no difficulty".

The *Natal Mercury* had on a previous occasion remarked that cases

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of "real grievances" would readily command its sympathy. Was this or was this not, a case of a "real grievance", Gandhiji asked. He had found it difficult, he added, to ask respectable Indian youths who sought his advice to take out the Mayor's pass of exemption. But since the first application had been refused, it had damped the zeal of others. The press by its opinion could either make it easier "for apparently respectable Indians to take out the Mayor's pass of exemption or else (make it) almost impossible for the police to repeat such arrests".[41]

Gandhiji's letter evoked considerable public sympathy for the two Indian lads, and brought upon the police chief severe censure. "The officer," acidly commented one journal, "certainly does not abstain from attributing the most angelic qualities to the members of his force. *En passant*, I may remark that the constant rushing into print by a superintendent of police when he happens to be piqued at losing a case is not desirable and, unless I am mistaken, the Corporation has more than once expressed disapproval of the practice."[42]

Taking the Superintendent to task for referring to the two Indian lads as "upstarts", "Spectator" wrote in the *Natal Advertiser:* "Whatever the motive of the Superintendent, he certainly had no right to make such a remark", and concluded:

> The Superintendent wants to reserve the right of cuffing Europeans and for his men the cuffing of Indians, all which must go unpunished. The fine imposed on himself recently, and on one of his constables, is a miscarriage of justice in his eyes.[43]

But Gandhiji had sensed beneath the unshed prejudice and rough-and-ready methods of this Superintendent, a kind, benevolent heart, a keen sense of duty, as he understood his duty, and a love of justice and fair play. He continued to cultivate him and his men's goodwill. Superintendent Alexander became his staunch supporter and one of the best friends of the Indian community.

5

The Ladysmith Local Board refused to mend its ways. Its servants went on bullying and violently using those who they thought were of colour, until they ran into Mrs Vinden.

An Indian school teacher from Madras, and wife of David Vinden, the Indian interpreter to the Resident Magistrate's court at Ladysmith, she was on the night of December 15, 1895, returning home after service in All Saints' Church. Her sister-in-law and a boy, who accompanied her, were stopped by a Kaffir policeman. Seizing her by the neck he demanded her pass. In falling down one of her shoes came off. While she was trying to pick it up, she was grabbed by the dress, part of which was torn in the scuffle. A French creole roughly shook her at

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the door of the police station. She was asked if she was Madame David. A "native" who used to be in her employ at once identified her from inside the station. Despite this she was rudely pushed into a dark cell and fell. After about 20 minutes, William Macdonald, Chief Constable, arrived and, learning who she was, ordered her release. She had fainted and had not recovered by the time she was taken home.

Dr. Moberley, who examined her injuries, ordered her to bed for eight days. Under her torn dress there was a swelling on her knee which was very painful. She complained of pain in "the back, chest and elsewhere". A short convulsive attack had followed.

Mrs Vinden sued the Local Board of Ladysmith for "illegal arrest and imprisonment whereby she had suffered pain of body and mind, and had been injured in her reputation", and claimed £200 damages. Her sister-in-law also brought an action for a similar amount.

The case came up for hearing before the full Bench of the Supreme Court, Mr Carter appearing for the complainant, Mr Tatham and Mr Robinson for defence. It transpired during the trial that on the morning the letters of demand to the Corporation were sent to the Ladysmith Local Board, William Macdonald had gone to David Vinden and threateningly said: "I don't want to intimidate you in this case, but if you proceed with this case, I shall have to tell the Government what I know about you."

In the course of cross examination by Mrs Vinden's counsel, William Macdonald was asked:

Q: Did you take any steps to ascertain whether these policemen who made the arrest had behaved in a proper manner to the plaintiff?

A: Nothing beyond asking if they had done so. Q: Did you report Vinden to the Government as you threatened? A: No, not yet. Q: I suppose if he loses this case there will be no need to do so? A: I don't know so much about that.

Sir Walter Wragg: Did you tell your constables the arrest was a mistake?

Witness: I did not tell them then, but I have told them since.

By Sir Walter Wragg: We have been in the habit of arresting Indians and natives for being out after hours. Q: Do you arrest Arabs? A: No. Q: Why? A: There seems to be an understanding in the Colony not to arrest them. Q: An Arab is a person of colour — why do you not arrest him? A: For the same reason that we do not arrest Vinden. Q: Why? A: I do not consider he is coolie.

Sir Walter: 'Coolie' has nothing to do with colour. Why is not an Arab arrested?

Witness: Because I don't think he comes within that meaning of the law. Q: Why? A: I will leave that to your Lordship to decide . . . (Laughter).

Mr Justice Mason: I suppose you don't deal with people of recognised positions, and whom you know, even although they are of colour?

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Witness: No.
Sir Walter Wragg: Then, it is the 'position' and not the 'colour'.

The counsel for the defence tried to make out that it was not a legitimate and genuine attempt to redress a wrong; the women who were sueing in the two cases were "mere puppets", and the whole thing "from beginning to end was just a little comedy". It was possible that there was "a slight technical mistake" on the part of the Board, but "a trivial matter had been swelled out into a Supreme Court action".

In delivering judgment the Chief Justice declined to give a serious definition of the meaning of "coloured person" in the law of 1869, but held that "the fact of being a coloured person was not itself sufficient cause for punishing a person at criminal law". If a native had been out at night, he was entitled, when he came before a Magistrate in the morning, to say he was going home — that he was going about his usual vocation — and he was not to be prejudiced by the mere fact of being out. The law before the court was a copy of the George IV statute, entitled "An Act for the Punishment of Idle and Disorderly Persons, and Rogues and Vagabonds" and was called a "Law for the Punishment of Idle and Disorderly Persons and Vagrants within the Colony of Natal". The statute was directed against "a particular habit and mode of life", against persons "making *a habit or mode of life* to wander abroad and to place themselves in public places for the purposes of alms" (Italics mine). The case before the Court could not "by any stretch of imagination come within the meaning of that Act". Censuring the conduct of the servants of the Corporation in "wantonly and improperly" putting a person of "superior status, and blameless character whose identity was not in doubt" as "unjust, harsh, and tyrannical" his Lordship observed:

> She suffered indignity, she suffered pain, and she suffered agony, and no person would like, for a small sum of money, to be taken out of a lighted room, put into a dark cell, and be there confined for several minutes, which might appear to be hours to the party confined, and were sufficient to produce agony of mind and a feeling of bitter resentment against the imprisoners.[44]

At the same time his Lordship felt that the damages ought not to be excessive, and he thought £20 should be sufficient.

Concurring, Sir Walter Wragg remarked that the Board had endeavoured to justify the action of its servants by saying that the plaintiff was a coloured person, liable to arrest under Law 15, 1869, and had further pleaded *bona fides*. The question directly put to the court was, whether or no Mrs Vinden was a coloured person within the meaning of the law. His brethren had been slow to say much on that point, but he had formed a very strong opinion — though what he said must be taken merely as his personal judgment — that Mrs Vinden "was not a coloured person within the meaning of the law". The whole history of the Vagrancy Law, which he traced in detail showed

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that it was meant to apply only to "coolies". To call Mrs Vinden a "coolie" was therefore, "as monstrous a misuse of the word as to call an Englishman a Frenchman".[45]

Further, the section of the law under which the Board defended its action did not say that such persons were liable to be arrested. Only the preceding section did, and it carried with it the proviso that it was not to apply to the whole section." In arresting Mrs Vinden, therefore, the servants of the Board had exceeded the power that the law conferred on the Board.

It was only in the by-law of the Board that the question of a pass was introduced. The Law said nothing about it. It was only in a subsequent by-law that the Board had given to its own servants the power to arrest without a warrant, *and it was a matter of argument whether in these respects each of these sections is not ultra vires of the Law* 15 *of* 1869, *and the amending law of* 1884. . . . *But whether or no she was a coloured person within the meaning of the law, her arrest was unjustifiable.*

Remarking on a Maritzburg case, where a European (Jackson) got £20 from the Court, his Lordship thought that Mrs Vinden "could not complain if she was put on the same footing as a white person".[46]

Judgment was entered for £20 damages with costs. In the action by the step-sister of Mrs Vinden the Court awarded £10 with no costs.

Sir Walter Wragg's *ipse dixit* on legal interpretation of "colour", the *Natal Witness* commented, "will not pass unnoticed by Mr Gandhi". The case was of "special interest", too, "from the Chief Justice's opinion — presumably the judgment of the Court — that the fact of being a coloured person and being out after 9 p.m. does not constitute a punishable offence if a 'good account' or 'sufficient explanation' is given".

The Supreme Court's decision in Mrs Vinden's case proved to be an important milestone in the "coloured man's" fight for self-respect and was hailed as much not only by the Indians but also by the Africans. The Vagrancy Law had pressed down on the Africans as harshly as upon the Indians; but vain had been their struggle against it. Some years back an ordained African minister on his way to his home from the railway station on Sunday night was arrested for being without a pass after 9 p.m., in spite of the fact that the police knew who and what he was. Another African, Lutuli, was fined five shillings by Resident Magistrate, Durban, for being out after hours without a pass. His appeal against the Durban Magistrate's decision was dismissed by Sir Walter Wragg in the Circuit Court. This had caused great indignation among the "exempted natives". Protest meetings were held and a prominent firm of lawyers were approached for legal opinion with a view to securing a ruling from the Supreme Court. The advice received was that Sir Walter's interpretation was correct and it was useless to go to the Supreme Court. This led to further agitation. A largely signed petition was sent

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to the Government to free them from the provisions of the "coloured law". The Bill introduced in the legislation was, however, withdrawn after having passed its second reading and left Africans frustrated and embittered. "A big dark cloud had been hanging over the status of an exempted native," wrote S. Nyovgwana, in the *Natal Witness*, "owing to an opinion expressed by Sir Walter Wragg two years ago . . . in the appeal of Lutuli against the Durban Resident Magistrate's decision." Sir Walter in that case had said "the tiger cannot change his spots", meaning that Lutuli, though exempted from the Native Law, nevertheless was under Law 15 of 1869, because mere exemption could not change his colour. "If there is a law," S. Nyovgwana observed, "that changed Mrs Vinden's colour in his Lordship's mind . . . surely he will admit that there can be a law to change Mr Lutuli's colour." He hoped that now that the Judges of the Supreme Court had decided in favour of a Coloured, "Superintendent Alexander . . . and others will in future learn that the fact of being a coloured person is not of itself sufficient cause for punishing a person under criminal law." He naturally sympathised with Mrs Vinden, he said, but was thankful "it was herself, who would not be stopped by ridiculous excuses from bringing to justice the offenders that was locked up".[47]

This is perhaps the first instance of recognition by the African coloured folk that the South African Indian struggle was by implication a struggle for their emancipation also. This awareness imperceptibly deepened with the Indian struggle. The example of the Indian success without the use of arms later sparked independence movements all over Africa and became the precursor of the coloured man's battle for self-respect and his lost heritage in more than one country.

6

Three days after the Natal Parliament had passed the third reading of the Franchise Amendment Bill, in 1894 (See page 428), it was sent to the Governor. Attached to it was the proviso that it was not to become law until by proclamation or otherwise the Governor had signified that it was not the wish of Her Majesty's Government to disallow it. It was accompanied by Sir John Robinson's minute dated July 10, 1894, reading:

> Ministers beg to point out that the measure . . . has been passed by the unanimous votes of both Houses of the Legislature. They believe that this unanimity is due to a conviction, universal amongst the European residents of the Colony, that unless Asiatics are debarred from voting, the electorates will at no distant date be swamped by voters who are wholly unfitted by their experience and habits to exercise intelligently and independently franchise privileges.

A fervent appeal was respectfully made to bear in mind, " the

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interests of the 'native' inhabitants of the Colony". Inasmuch as they "do not possess the franchise, the local Government and Parliament are responsible for their welfare". The note proceeded:

Government deems the law indispensable in the interest of the Colony. They feel assured that *the measure is one which public opinion will insist upon as being necessary to itself and justifiable on the highest grounds of public propriety and advantage* (Italics mine).

Adverting to its constitutional aspect, Attorney-General, Harry Escombe, wrote on July 13: "I am of opinion that the Royal Assent may properly be given to the Act."

The Governor of Natal forwarded the Bill to the Secretary of State for Colonies praying for assent. The Bill, he urged, disfranchised nobody who already held the franchise "be he Asiatic or not". Those who were affected by it were mainly store-keepers and their assistants numbering about 400. They had no interests in common with "the bulk of the Asiatic population", which consisted of the Hindu and Tamil labourers and domestic servants from Madras and Calcutta and some immigrants who having served their indentures, now earned their living as gardeners and cooks etc. Most of these were "protected" under "special laws" and were entitled to, as soon as the term of the protection expired, to return passages to their native country. The store-keepers

came of their own accord. . . . *They were not welcome guests. The Colony would rather be without them,* but it has not done anything to prevent them from coming. All that it asks is that they may not be allowed to interfere in the Government of country. *Any who come in future will do so with the knowledge that they cannot acquire franchise rights.* (Italics mine)

The question was not, the Governor continued in his note, whether the Asiatic should be granted franchise privilege in his own country, but "whether he should be allowed to exercise a voice which will surely become a controlling force in the Government of the Colony". If the law remained as it was, "the number of Asiatics who hold the franchise will from fresh arrivals increase so as to give the Asiatic vote a very strong influence in the elections", a result which would "seriously affect the interest of Natal and *would probably tend to render South African Union impossible*". This catastrophe could be averted "without injustice to anybody" if the Act was allowed to become law. (Italics mine)

This was a surprising statement to come from the representative of Her Majesty's Government, who was charged with the duty of watching over and safeguarding the rights and privileges of the Queen's Indian subjects, settled in the Colony, as fellow citizens of the Empire. But then, as the *Natal Advertiser* declared later, in his relations with the Ministry His Excellency was "as clay in the hands of the potter".[48] Sir John Robinson's comment on the Indian Memorial

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drafted by Gandhiji, that had in the meantime been submitted to the Governor, ran thus:

There are 10,000 electors already on the voters' Roll. Consequently had the 8,888 petitioners their desire at this moment they would form nearly nine-tenths of the whole electorate. This may be accepted as conclusive evidence of the danger that menaces the electorate should Asiatics continue to be admitted to the franchise.

How Sir John could make this statement passes one's comprehension. Not even all whites, and only a very small fraction of the Indians, could satisfy all the property and other qualifications for the franchise laid down by the constitution of the self-governing Natal. It was idle therefore to represent that all the signatories to the Indian petition could be admitted to the franchise under the existing law. The Governor must have known this. Or, was he deliberately trying to mislead the Home Government?

The logical conclusion, he went on to say, "seems to be that these present voters should also be disqualified". Adding insult to injury, he concluded, "There is nothing to show that Indian children born in the Colony differ in racial characteristics from their progenitors. There is every reason to believe that the retention of the franchise by the Asiatic would tend to embitter the relations of the several races hereafter."

Towards the close of July 1894 all papers connected with the Franchise Bill were sent to London. Lord Ripon who received them kept mum. But the *Daily Chronicle* had somehow got the wind of the matter. "The first responsible Ministry in Natal," it wrote:

appears to be bent on distinguishing itself, if Lord Ripon will only permit it. Its precious Franchise Law Amendment Bill is coming home for the sanction of the Secretary for the Colonies, and we hope his Lordship will consign it to his waste-paper basket.

Referring to the fear among the Europeans that they might be outvoted by the Indians if the franchise remained open to them, it observed:

The numbers of the two nationalities are pretty nearly equal, but the depressed conditions of the vast majority of the Indians prove the emptiness of the dread. Like the Natal Attorney-General, we 'cannot recognise the justice or expediency of such a measure.' The reasons ostensibly advanced are preposterous as well as grossly insulting. When there are native members of the Viceroy of India's Council, the Legislative Assembly and Council of Natal can scarcely be permitted to ostracise native members representing such constituencies as may be pleased to return them.[49]

Commenting on this F.R.S. wrote in the *Natal Advertiser:*

You exclude Indians from political rights yourselves; but you clap your

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hands when you hear that the Imperial Government is going to force the Transvaal Government to rescind the law by which Indians are compelled to live in locations. You resent interference from outside with your own natives, and incite the Imperial Government to interfere with native matters in the Transvaal. Is this hypocrisy? Is it stupidity? Or is it a mixture of both? Is it not plainly to be seen that everything said in favour of Imperial interference in the Transvaal in such matters weakens the case for Natal?[50]

Sir William Wedderburn, a retired official, raised the matter in the Commons. On the death of his brother he had succeeded to the baronetcy and family estates and had been returned to the House. He asked whether the Secretary of State for the Colonies had received a petition from the British Indian subjects in the Colony of Natal, protesting against the Franchise Law Amendment Bill, which would have the effect of excluding them from the franchise, and whether the Secretary of State would disallow the Bill on the ground that it was retrograde in character and based upon race disqualifications. Replying, the Under Secretary of State, Mr Buxton, stated on August 23 that the petition referred to by the Honourable Member had been received and, it was understood, would be followed by another. The Act, however, had only just come under the consideration of Her Majesty's Government, and therefore he could not make any statement on the subject for the present.

Non-committal as this reply was, it set the whole of the Natal press buzzing. The *Natal Witness* wrote that there was something in the tone of the reply "which we did not quite like". But this was of little consequence. It was not any opposition from men like Sir William Wedderburn that was much to be apprehended. "Whilst in India he was one of the advanced party which would confer representation upon the inhabitants, and has not changed his views as to their fitness for some kind of representative government since he entered Parliament." What they had reason to feel concerned about was "the views which Lord Ripon held during his government of India, which gave rise to considerable commotion, and to an agitation which his successor, Lord Lansdowne, had to state emphatically would not attain the object aimed at".[51]

A rumour was afoot that the Natal Bill might be returned for amendment. But as the Bill had not been noticed by the leading Government journal or any other Ministerial paper, and the Parliament had adjourned, no authentic clue to the opinion of the Colonial office could be obtained. The Natal Ministry's reticence heightened the impatience, and anxiety of the Natal whites rose to a fever pitch. By the third week of May the Ministry could keep silent no longer. Addressing a public meeting at Bellair, Mr Steinbank, Speaker of the Natal Assembly, declared that "if the Bill were vetoed, it would be passed again next session in precisely the same form" and "a stronger one would be passed until the principle was assured".[52]

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The *Natal Witness* thereupon suggested that the Bill should be put in force whether vetoed or not, as once Sir John Gordon Sprigg, Premier of the Cape (1878-1881) had threatened to do in connection with the Cape Registration Bill. If the rumour "should prove to be correct the request must be firmly but respectfully refused. The Colony must be permitted to be the only judge of the classes of persons who should be given the franchise".[53] Alarmed by the stir that the Indian petition had caused at Home and the publicity it had received in South Africa, it wrote: "The object of the Asiatic wire-pullers is revolutionary, and therefore no petition either for themselves or on their behalf can be listened to."[54] In support it quoted the comments of *The Times* that unless "something of the sort" were done, that is placing a restriction on the franchise, "it would only be a question of time when self-respecting Europeans should decline to accept any responsibility for Government carried on under such conditions, and the Colony would lapse into a Kafir dependency of British India".[55]

Exasperated by the Natal Government's "reluctance" to take the Colony into its confidence, the *Natal Advertiser* urged that if the Bill was vetoed and it was the intention of the Government to follow it with another, the Colony ought to know it as soon as possible "so that the Ministry may be able to show that they are but the instruments of the people's will".[56] It further suggested that, should the Secretary of State ask for an alteration, the Cape Government should be persuaded to pass a similar Bill so that the two Colonies could "thus present a united front".[57]

St. James' Budget rallied to the support of the Natal whites. Taking Sir William Wedderburn to task for asking Lord Ripon, "to over-rule by an arbitrary stroke of the pen, 'the constitutionally expressed wishes of a self-governing community' on the ground that it was 'retrograde' " it asked whether "it is not also retrograde in a Liberal to invoke officialdom to veto a Bill of a Colony which has acquired the right to rule itself".[58] In an article headed, "A Harmony in White, Black and Brown with an Element of Discord" after a famous painting by Whistler, echoing Rhodes' dictum, "Natives are mentally children," (See p. 356), it wrote:

> Can it be wondered at . . . that Sir John has deemed it necessary to ask that for some time to come at any rate the Asiatic in Natal shall be placed on a par as regards the right to Parliamentary vote, with the European who although the heir of ages of franchise enjoyment and equipped with all the mental panoply which a college education can confer, may be under the age of 21? Until we are somewhat nearer the millennium, Natal's whites claim, with one voice, to treat her browns and blacks as minors.[59]

The *Natal Mercury* attributed the "recrudescence of the coolie question" mainly to "the agitation of an Indian now practising as an Attor-

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ney in Durban". It indicated "somewhat the force which is doubtless being brought to bear on the Secretary of State for the Colonies to prevent the passing into law the Franchise Law Amendment Bill". The only soothing balm it could offer to the Natalians was that in no instance, had "the theories of Mr Gandhi obtained support". The issue was clear. Either Natal was "to remain a white colony and ruled by whites", or become "a mere dependency of the Indian Empire. This is the position our contemporaries say we occupy at this juncture, and they consider there is but one course open, and that that course is in the direction of the Bill now awaiting the Royal assent."[60] Reiterating the remarks of a "prominent representative on his recent visit to England" to one of the officials of the Home Department it wrote: "His Lordship may be certain that if the Bill is rejected, he will not only see it back again, but it will probably be made even more stringent."[61]

The political sky of the Indians was becoming overcast not in Natal alone. The outlook was no less gloomy in the Cape, in Zululand, and in the Chartered territories. The Dutch Republics had settled the "colour question" once for all by excluding all but Burghers from the franchise, and by having separate Churches for Africans in pursuance of their policy of "No equality in Church or State". In the Cape Cecil Rhodes, to propitiate his Dutch following in the Bond, had excluded the "blanket kaffirs" from the franchise register by the Ballot and Franchise Act of 1892, which raised the property qualification and introduced an education test. The following year, he moved swiftly. A Malay doctor, Dr. Abdur Rehman, was likely to be elected to the Cape Division. The "plumping" of four votes, which each elector in that division alone enjoyed, would do this. Rhodes abolished that privilege. After the election of 1894 he had the Glen Grey Act passed — his "Bill for Africa" (See p. 364). In February, 1895, a Mayoral Congress comprising all the mayors of the Cape, was held at Capetown. Among the measures considered by it was "the segregation of natives, Indians, coolies, and Chinese, discouraging and regulating the immigration of Asiatics; and regulating their admission into the Colony".[62] The Congress resolved that the time had come when the Government "should legislate in the direction of regulating or prohibiting the importation into the Colony of these people". But Rhodes had his fears. On May 20, he was reported as stating in reply to a question by Molteno in the Cape Parliament that the Imperial Government "would not sanction differential legislation against particular races". Natal had invited the Cape to join a Conference on the subject, he went on to say, and they would ask the House for authority to join that conference. They would then be able to obtain united action, "otherwise these people would come in by way of Natal".[63]

The reference was to the "coolie conference" proposed by Natal to find a common solution of the Asiatic question for the whole of South

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Africa, to which representatives had been invited from the Republics in addition to the two colonies. The conference could not be held only because the Orange Free State declined to participate in it as they had "already regulated the question by law"[64] and Natal, as the Chairman of the Raad bitterly complained, had "often refused to enter into conference with the Free State".[65] The Transvaal Republic, on the other hand, felt that after the De Villiers' Award in its favour (See next chapter) there was no need on its part for any further action. But shortly afterwards the Cape Legislature partially achieved its end by passing a measure that *empowered the East London Municipality to make bye-laws compelling "natives" and Indians to remove to and reside in certain locations and prohibiting them from walking on foot-paths.*

Even Zululand had promulgated bye-laws discriminating against the Indians (See next chapter). In the Chartered territories the local European merchants had, to quote the *Cape Times*, begun "to get the funks" about the Asiatic and Arab traders starting in opposition to them.[66] An Indian, who had been refused a trade licence by the Civil Commissioner, petitioned the High Court and the High Court decided that a licence could not be refused. Thereupon an agitation was set up by the Bulawayo Chamber of Commerce and resolutions were passed and sent to Rhodes, opposing the granting of licence, at a meeting that was described by the *South African Times* as being "in no wise a representative one" and which if it had been so would have reflected "little credit . . . on the inhabitants of Salisbury".[67]

The future was desolate. The odds arrayed against the Indians were overwhelming. Gandhiji was only on the threshold of political life. He had no experience. Nor had he any sanction on which he could rely. The only sanction known at that time was force. This the Indian community did not possess. Non-violence had not yet swum into his ken. But he had the boundless confidence of youth in the sovereignty of reason. He believed in the British ideals of freedom, justice and fair-play and in the essential principles of Christian conduct with an intensity that perhaps even the Europeans never deemed possible. As he analysed the attitude of the South African whites, he came upon hate-fear complex, and crass prejudice, rooted in ignorance, which made them act against the ideals they professed and even their enlightened self-interest. He had faith in human nature. Man is a rational being, he reasoned. If only they could see that what he told them was the truth and nothing but truth — that behind his words was only his deep yearning for their understanding and friendship and love of the ideals and values which they themselves professedly cherished — their conduct would be transformed. And since this transformation would be spontaneous and from within, not brought about by outside pressure, it would be loved by the whites themselves and be all the more compelling and lasting on that account.

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To carry on agitation in England is but a poor relief when it can only create a greater friction between the two peoples in the Colony. The relief, at best, could only be temporary. Unless the Europeans in the Colony can be induced to accord the Indians a better treatment, the Indians have a very bad time before them under the aegis of the Responsible Government, in spite of the vigilance of the Home Government.[68]

7

It was this train of reasoning that led Gandhiji, as the Secretary of the Natal Indian Congress, during its first year to issue his "Open Letter" to the members of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly of Natal that became famous. That the Indian was a despised being in the Colony, he began, anyone who had eyes could see. If this hatred was based on his (the Indian's) colour then, of course, there was no hope. "*The sooner he leaves the Colony the better. No matter what he does, he will never have the white skin.*" (Italics mine). On the other hand, if it was based upon ignorance of his general character and attainments, there was hope of his receiving justice and fair treatment at the hands of the Europeans in the Colony. Behind it was Gandhiji's conviction that they were at heart good and justice-loving. He had chosen to address the letter to the members of the two Houses of the Natal Parliament, he explained, because, they being the spokesmen and leaders of public opinion, what they thought and did would set the pattern for the rest to follow.

He pleaded with them to consider four questions:

> (a) Were Indians desirable as citizens in the Colony? (b) What were they? Were they 'uncivilised, aboriginal people' as presumed in the Transvaal Constitution, or were they members of the same family to which the Europeans themselves belonged, with a hoary tradition of culture and civilisation second to none in the world? (c) Was the treatment they were receiving in accordance with the principles of justice and morality, or with the tenets of Christianity? (d) Was the abrupt or gradual exclusion of the Indians from the Colony in the interest of the Colony itself?

As for the first, Natalians who were competent to speak had acknowledged that the indentured Indians were indispensable for the Colony's welfare. They did well the work that the white man was unwilling to do and the native unable to perform. "Withdraw the Indian from the sugar estate, and where would the main industry of the Colony be?" In contrast with Natal, the South African Republic, "in spite of its so-called vigorous native policy" had remained "practically a desert although its soil was very fertile".

The charge had been levelled against the Indian traders, "miscalled Arabs", that they were given to sharp practices and that they had a bad record as to insolvency. The fact of the matter, Gandhiji

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pointed out, was that they were in that regard no better or worse than European traders. "I would only say without meaning in the least to defend them, let those that are without sin cast the first stone! Please examine the records of the Insolvency Court."

The success of the Indian trader in competition against the white trader could not be held against him. It was the fruit of his industry, skill, thrift and abstemious habits. He was addicted neither to gambling nor to drink. He earned his bread by the sweat of his brow. He was a veritable blessing to the "poor white", as by his competition he kept down the prices of the necessaries of life, and he was indispensable to the Indian labourers whose needs he studied and supplied and on whom the prosperity of the European middle and upper class depended. The Indian trader was thus not only a desirable and useful addition to the Colony's population, he was absolutely essential to its wellbeing.

The Indians were accused of being insanitary. To his "great mortification" he had partially to admit the charge. But, "a strict, yet just and merciful operation of the sanitary law", he ventured to suggest, could "effectually cope with the evil and even eradicate it". With the exception of the indentured Indians, who were "too poor to attend to personal cleanliness", the personal habits of the Indians as a race were not dirty. "The trading community are compelled by their religion to bathe at least once a week and have to perform ablutions every time they offer prayers. They are supposed to offer prayers four times a day, and there are only few who fail to do so at least twice a day". In any case their alleged insanitary habits never could be a reason for their expulsion from the Colony. They were not "hopelessly beyond reform" in that respect.

Under the second head, he pointed out that, contrary to the prevailing notion about the Indians in South Africa that they were descended from an inferior stock and were only a step removed, if at all, from the raw savages, to which was due "one-half or even three-fourths" of the hardships entailed upon them, savants all over the world were agreed that "the forefathers of the Greek and the Roman, of the Englishman and the Hindoo dwelt together in Asia, spoke the same tongue and worshipped the same gods". The "Brahman solutions to the problems of practical religion" had, according to the author of the *Indian Empire* — Dr (afterwards Sir William) Hunter — provided "final answers" to the practical questions of the spiritual life; "Brahman philosophy" had "exhausted the possible solutions . . . of intellectual problems of religion and of most of the other great problems which have since perplexed the Greek and Roman sage, mediaeval schoolman and modern man of science". Max Muller had sung the praise of the Hindu speculative philosophy. Schopenhauer, the celebrated German philosopher, had said about the "Oupnekhat" (*Upanishad*): "It has been the solace of my life; it will be the solace of my death."

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Coming to Indian character and social life, Sir George Birdwood had borne witness that "moral truthfulness" was "as marked a characteristic of the Settia (upper) class of Bombay as of the Teutonic race itself".[69] Sir W. W. Hunter had noted that the love of parents for children and children for parents had scarcely any counterpart in England. "Parental and filial affection occupies among our Eastern fellow-citizens the place which is taken in this country by the passion between the sexes." Frederick Pincott had set down as his considered view that "in all social matters the English are far more fitted to sit at the feet of Hindus and learn as disciples than to attempt to become masters".

After quoting at some length from the testimony of such eminent authorities as M. S. Maine, Andrew Carnegie, Munro and Sir Charles Trevelyan, he went on to show that far from being uncivilised, India had for long led the world in Literature, Law, Mathematics and Astronomy, Administration and Political Science — not to mention the science of language, as exemplified by Panini's grammar — the science of comparative religion and of comparative philology, which was India's special gift to the world. And this creative impulse was not merely a thing of the past but a continuing living tradition.[70] Contemporary India had produced journalists like Christodas Paul, Justices of the calibre of Mahmood — Sir Syed Ahmed's son — and Sir. T. Muthuswami Aiyer, orators like Surendranath Banerjee and Pherozeshah Mehta.

Such was India. He admitted that there was another side to the shield. But if they examined both sides "with the impartiality of a Daniel", there would "yet remain a considerable portion of what has been said above untouched, to induce you to believe that India . . . is a civilised country in the truest sense of the term".

Anticipating the objection by the whites, that they were not concerned with the past glory that was claimed for India but the Indians as they found them in the Colony, Gandhiji continued, "It will be said: 'If what you say is true, the people whom you call Indians in the Colony are not Indians. . . . See how grossly untruthful they are'." Almost everybody he had met with in the Colony had dwelt upon the "untruthfulness" of Indians. To a limited extent he admitted the charge, but he maintained that in that regard Indians were not worse than any other section.

> It will be very small satisfaction for me to show . . . that other classes do not fare much better in this respect, especially if and when they are placed in a position of the unfortunate Indians. And yet, I am afraid, I shall have to fall back upon argument of that sort. Much as I would wish them to be otherwise, I confess my utter inability to prove that they are more than human.

The indentured labourers, who constituted the bulk of the Indian popu-

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lation were brought to the Colony on starvation wages. They were placed among uncongenial surroundings. Almost from the moment they left India they remained absolutely without any moral or religious instruction worthy of name. Was it any wonder that placed thus they were apt "to yield to the slightest temptation" to tell a lie? "After some time lying with them becomes a habit and a disease. They would lie without any reason, without any prospect of bettering themselves materially, indeed, without knowing what they are doing." Ultimately they reached a stage in life when their moral faculties were completely benumbed.

But there was also "a very sad form" of lying, for which their white masters rather than they were to blame.

> They cannot dare tell the truth, even for their wantonly ill-treated brother, for fear of receiving ill-treatment from their master. They are not philosophic enough to look with equanimity on the threatened reduction in their miserable rations and severe corporal punishment, did they dare to give evidence against their master. Are these men, then, more to be despised than pitied? . . . Is there any class of people who would not do as they are doing under similar circumstances?

It had, however, been said that the Indian traders were "equally good liars", as their behaviour in the law courts showed. He conceded that this would be a serious indictment of the Indian traders, if it could be proved. But the charge was groundless. The Indian traders did not lie "more than the other classes do for the purposes of trade or law". They were very much misunderstood. Drawing upon his court experience from day to day, he drew a graphic word-picture of what actually happened there. The misunderstanding arose firstly because the Indian traders could not speak English, and secondly, because the interpretation was very defective.

> No fault of the interpreters. The interpreters are expected to perform the Herculean task of interpreting successfully in four languages, viz., Tamil, Telugu, Hindustani and Gujarati. . . . The interpreters, with one exception, speak the local Hindustani, which is a grotesque mixture of Tamil, Gujarati and other Indian languages, clothed in extremely bad Hindustani grammar. Very naturally, the interpreter has to argue with the witness before he can get at his meaning. While the process is going on, the Judge grows impatient, and thinks that the witness is prevaricating. The poor interpreter, if questioned, . . . in order to conceal his defective knowledge of the language, says the witness does not give straight answers. The poor witness has no opportunity of setting himself right . . . the Judge makes up his mind not to believe a word of what the witness says, and puts him down for a liar.[71]

Such was the handicap under which paucity of competent interpreters and translators in the Colony put Indian clients and poor Indian witnesses in Courts that moved by their plight Gandhiji some time later

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took the extraordinary step of applying to the Supreme Court for appointment as a "sworn Gujarati translator". In a case in which he was engaged difficulty arose in getting the language translated on account of the departure of the sworn translators from the Colony. Sir Walter Wragg, thereupon suggested that as Gandhiji was actually doing the translation it would be better to have it made official. On the application being presented by Mr Pitcher, however, the Chief Justice disapproved of it: "If Mr Gandhi likes to commit a breach of professional etiquette, he can become translator." But brushing aside considerations of "prestige", Gandhiji pressed his application which was granted. And so M. K. Gandhi, Attorney, Agent for the Esoteric Christian Union and for the London Vegetarian Society, became also a "Sworn Translator" of the Supreme Court of Natal.[72]

As for the third question, whether the treatment that the Indian received in accordance with the best British traditions or the principles of justice or morality, or whether Christian-like, one had only to see the spate of scornful abuse that was poured on him in the press and the incidents of his ill-treatment reported from day to day to answer it for oneself.

> The man in the street hates him, curses him, spits upon him and often pushes him off the footpath. . . . The tram cars are not for the Indians. The railway officials may treat the Indians as beasts. No matter how clean, his very sight is such an offence to every white man in the Colony that he would object to sit, even for a short time, in the same compartment with the Indian. The hotels shut their doors against them. I know instances of respectable Indians having been denied a night's lodging in an hotel. Even the public baths are not for the Indians, no matter who they are.

The Vagrant Law was needlessly oppressive. On top of it, there were proposals to force the Indians into ghetto-like locations and heavily to tax Indians who wished to stay in the Colony as free Indians on the completion of their stipulated term of indenture. Quoting from Macaulay's celebrated speech: "We are free, we are civilised, to little purpose, if we grudge to any portion of the human race an equal measure of freedom and civilisation," he observed:

> To bring a man here on starvation wages, to hold him under bondage, and when he shows the least signs of liberty, or, is in a position to live less miserably, to wish to send him back to his home where he would become comparatively a stranger and perhaps unable to earn a living, is hardly a mark of fair play or justice characteristic of the British nation.

Much less worthy was it of a people that professed to follow the teachings of Christ, "the Man who taught us to love our enemies and to give our cloak to the one who wants the coat . . . who swept away the distinction between the Jew and the Gentile",

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In regard to the last part of the enquiry, whether it was in the interest of the Colony to exclude Indians altogether from the Colony, the test was simple enough: "Why not try it?" He, for one, would not be much grieved, he said, if "an experiment were tried to drive out each and every Indian from the Colony". But he warned them that the "Colonists would soon rue the day and . . . wish they had not done it. The petty trades and the petty avocations of life would . . . not be taken up by the Europeans, and the Colony would lose an immense amount of revenue now derived from the Indians". If, however, the Indians were to be kept in the Colony, it was but fair that they should "receive such treatment as by their ability and integrity they may be fit to receive".

Providence had put the English and the Indians together, he concluded, and had placed in the hands of the former the destinies of the latter. It would, therefore, largely depend upon what every Englishman did with respect to the Indians and how he treated them, whether the putting together would result in forging an everlasting bond between them based upon sympathy, love and free association, or whether the putting together "will simply last so long as the English have sufficient resources to keep the Indians under check, and the naturally mild Indians have not been vexed into active opposition to the foreign yoke".

Reaffirming his faith in British ideals of freedom and democracy, he reminded them of the declarations of the British Government, and the speeches, writings and actions of noble-hearted Englishmen like Bright, Gladstone and Ripon, Fawcett, Wedderburn and Reay that had sustained that faith. An English constituency had returned an Indian, Dadabhai Naoroji, to the British House of Commons in spite of the expressed wish of the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury. The British press, both Conservative and Liberal, had lauded his success. Warm welcome had been spontaneously accorded by the whole House. All these were indications that the best British minds desired to unify the hearts of the two peoples, that they did not believe in colour distinctions, and that they wished to "raise India with them rather than rise upon its ruin".

In a covering note to the "Open Letter" Gandhiji invited various groups of Europeans — whether clergymen, editors, public men, merchants or lawyers — to turn the searchlight inward, judge the issues set forth by the standards they professed and then favour him with their reaction. "Your opinion is solicited with a view to ascertain if there are many Europeans in the Colony who would actively sympathise with and feel for the Indians in the Colony, assuming that their treatment is not all that could be desired."[73]

Few Europeans cared to reply. The scribblings on the photostats, reproduced elsewhere provide a fair indication of their reaction of irritation, that found expression in expletives like "nonsense", "rubbish" and so on. On the whole, however, the appeal had an immense impact

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on the press in South Africa and informed British opinion in the United Kingdom. Almost every leading newspaper of South Africa noticed it at length. His facts could not be challenged. To controvert his conclusions they were forced to resort to casuistry and special pleading. In the process they often contradicted one another and sometimes even what had appeared in their own columns.

For instance, the *Natal Witness* absolved the Indian from the charge of untruthfulness, admitting that "the European, and the native, too is not faultless in this respect . . . and as Mr Gandhi says in most instances the Indian knows no better". It also admitted that he was "an excellent labourer". It, however, maintained that he was "a very undesirable colonist", and had therefore to be got rid of.

> If indentured, he is a man of bestial habits, given to malingering and dishonest practices. . . . If free, he drives the European out of the market by underselling him; he ruins the unsophisticated native by lending him money at an outrageous rate of interest, or by supplying him with bad liquor.[74]

This was a cruel libel on the men to whom the Colony owed so much, and the best proof of it was the cry from all over Natal for more and more Indian labour. The Indian Report for 1894 showed that despite the fact that abolition of the £10,000 annual subsidy to Indian immigration had raised the estimated cost of introduction to the employer under the new system from £17. 10s to £22. 10s per "male statute adult", the demand for Indian labour had remained unaffected. In fact, the *Natal Advertiser* pointed out, "the supply was not equal to the demand".[75] Even the *Witness* had been constrained to admit that the assumption from this was that "notwithstanding the increased cost to the employer, Indian labour by means of Immigration is still regarded as preferable to the available labour already in the Colony".[76] In the following year the demand for "indentured coolies" rose still higher, the indent for August, according to the report of the Immigration Trust Board for 1895, "having been one of the largest on record". The Report went on to add,

> There still being 2,046 more to be allotted thereunder, it is not expected that applicants can be supplied until well into the year 1896, so that it will be of no use calling for fresh applications for some months to come.

Pointing to this writing on the wall the *Natal Advertiser* commented: "The coolie has become an indispensable factor in the life of the Colony. Whether this fact is palatable or not it must be faced."[77]

The only alternative solution to Natal's labour problem that the *Natal Witness* could offer was to replace the Indian by the "native". But the white planter of tea and sugar, as the actual employer of Indian labour, knew where his interest lay. The tea industry in Natal had been growing by leaps and bounds. Already it was producing 800,000

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to 900,000 lbs. in the season. But while at the height of the tea season a gang of Indian labourers would pluck an average of 42 lbs. of tea leaves per hand per day, the 'Natal Kaffir' would only average 19 lbs. This explained, Mr Hindson of Messrs W. H. Hindson & Co., one of the biggest growers and exporters, told the representative of a Cape journal, why "the tea growers employ coolies only. The coolie was the making of Natal."

"Why," he asked,

do not your Cape farmers and employers take a leaf out of Natal's book and import the coolie labour which has built up the prosperity of that Country? Why?—because if you will forgive me, you are a little thick-headed in the old Colony.[78]

Hindsons, besides being successful planters and businessmen, were kindhearted employers of Indian labour who by their humane treatment had greatly endeared themselves to their men. Typical of their enlightened outlook on labour was their institution of annual sports on their tea estates. The event for 1895, according to a contemporary press report, was marked by "the usual Indian theatrical display", followed by a "very clever performance on the trapeze", and a tug of war between "ten men of the Clifton Estate and ten men of Nonoti Peak Estate". At the conclusion of the sports "prizes of money were distributed by Mrs Hindson who spoke a few kindly words to the coolies through the interpreter. Rice was distributed to the coolies and a large quantity of sweets to the children, all of whom thoroughly appreciated the kindness of Mr and Mrs Hindson, and all entered into the spirit of the entertainment most heartily".

But Hindsons like Liege Huletts and Marshall Campbells were exceptional among the Natal employers in the eighteen-nineties. Hardheartedness, selfishness and greed, added to racial and colour prejudice, filled the hearts of the vast bulk of the European employers of the Asiatic. "After this," commented the *Natal Mercury*, "it is to be hoped Mr Hindson will be accepted as a proper Gandhi-ist (propagandist) of good feeling between Europeans and Indians of the Colony",[79] — a comment indicative of the impact that Gandhiji's effort to unite the hearts of the Europeans and Indians in Natal already had on the European mind.

As for the African despising the Indian, a "native" journal *Inkanyiso*, remarked that the white press seemed to think that "any stick was good enough to beat a dog with" and in dealing with both the Native and Indian questions it had been their practice "to aim a blow at us with the first argument that came to hand, regardless of whether it was consistent or not". The other day, it went on to say,

the *Witness* when criticising Mr Gandhi's letter in defence of his people, abused the Indian because he remained in the Colony instead of returning to India

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when he had served his time. We remember reading an article in the same paper, not so long ago, in which the poor Indian got a severe word flogging, and why? *Because he left the Colony*, we are aware that it was because he took his money with him, but could anyone suppose that he would leave this behind? The Indian is one day blamed if he stays in the Colony. He is equally blamed the next for leaving it with his earnings. Now it appears that any argument — the nearest to hand, no matter how inconsistent — is also good enough to pitch into our people with. We are abused and held up to scorn as a lazy, worthless lot; but we come in for an equal amount of abuse when we prove that we not only can, but are willing to work. The Indian must go, but without his earnings. The Native must work, but not as a mechanic. Is this fair or reasonable?[80]

The *Natal Advertiser* commented that the author of the "Open Letter" had "overproved" his case. The "charge or insinuation" that the Indian was oppressed or persecuted in the Colony had "not a single atom of foundation", and as for the franchise he could not be admitted to it when he did not have it in his own country "where the Government is purely autocratic".[81] This was clearly overshooting the mark. Soon this organ of the planters, its eyes opened to the "Imperial" aspect of the question, began to sing a different tune. A hint had come from Whitehall.

But whether they agreed with Gandhiji's views, or with one another or not they all complimented him for the fairmindedness, restraint and ability with which he had stated his case. "We frankly admit," the *Natal Mercury* wrote,

> that Mr Gandhi writes with calmness and moderation. He is as impartial as anyone could expect him to be, and probably a little more so than might have been expected considering that he did not receive very just treatment at the hands of the Law Society when he first came to the Colony. Not only does Mr Gandhi write with marked moderation but the arguments he uses are skilfully put, and the 'Open Letter' is throughout distinctly creditable to him in every way.[82]

While not denying that there was prejudice against the Indian, the *Mercury* was "fairly certain" it was not of colour. "The prejudice against the Indian has been of his own making and the removal of it lies equally within his own power." Or, as it put it some time later, if a man who made £1,000 a year and lived as if he made but £50, he should not be surprised if he was "regarded socially according to what he spends and not what he makes. When people go to Rome, they must do as the Romans do". The "coolie" could not of course "be expected to live in a brick cottage and keep himself as a European", but the Indian merchants in Durban needed to be told "that if they live like coolies they cannot expect to be treated otherwise".[83]

In reply Gandhiji pointed out that in Mombasa, in Zanzibar and in Bombay — where Indian merchants had amassed fortunes — they had

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built themselves palatial buildings and in some instances even pleasure houses. If no Indian had done so in Durban it showed that he had not earned money enough to enable him to do so. "The fact is that perhaps there is no Indian in the Colony who alone earns £1,000 a year. . . . The trade of some of them is certainly very large; not so the profit, because it is shared by many." There was therefore no question of Indian traders earning £1,000 and living as if they were earning only £50. "If you will only study the question a little more closely . . . you will find that the Indians spend in this colony quite as much as they can without coming to grief."

As to the *Mercury*'s allegation against the Indians that "those who earned well slept on the floors of their shops", Gandhiji made a sporting offer to the editor: "If you would undeceive yourself and if you will leave your editorial chair for a few hours, I would escort you to some Indian stores. Then, perhaps, you would think much less harshly of them than now."[84]

The most effective reply to the *Mercury* was provided by its own columnist sometime later. Two Durban residents, an Englishman and an Arab, both unknown to each other, it seems, were on a visit to England at the same time. As the former was viewing London from a bus he saw a handsome equipage driving along, and reclining inside was an Indian wearing a tall hat, and dressed in rich Indian coat, &c. Thinking he recognised the features, he looked again,

and sure enough it was one of our Durban Arab merchants. On returning they met in West Street, when the Englishman informed the other that he saw him in London. 'Yes,' quickly responded the Arab, 'I saw you — on a penny bus!' Asked how he liked London, the Arab spoke of it most effusively, and stated he should go again soon, adding; 'Nice place, London; nice people. Members of Parliament shake hands; how-d'ye do, Mr—; come and dine with me; here is a ticket for a box at the theatre. Yes, very nice, in London. Here, in Natal people look, say who is that? Oh, only — coolie.'

"Which," commented the *Mercury* columnist, "exactly hits off the situation".[85]

So the Indian trader got it on the neck both ways. If he lived thriftily he was dubbed a "coolie" and treated as such. If on the other hand, he tried to live in style he excited the white colonist's jealousy. Here is an illustration. Some time before Gandhiji's arrival in South Africa, it was rumoured that the proprietors of an "Arab" firm were trying to recruit a number of white girls as shop assistants. The salaries they offered were "so handsome that several lady assistants in the large drapery establishments in town expressed a determination to put their pride in their pockets and suffer the indignity of being in the employ of an Arab". Thereupon the following appeared in the *Natal Witness*:

These wealthy Arabs are becoming luxurious. The other day I saw a

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fine sight, in the shape of an Arab, with his longskirted, turbaned family, lolling on the cushions of a large open carriage drawn by a pair of good horses. The white aristocrats of this town revel in coolie coachmen. Soon we will find our Arab friends employing white men to sit on the box decked out in all the glory of boots, buttons and breeches.[86]

It was the old story of the wolf and the lamb, the poor lamb was always in the wrong no matter what it did or whether it did anything or not.

8

The publication of the "Open Letter" brought sympathy for the Indian cause and for Gandhiji many friends even among those who were opposed to his political aims but had an eye for outstanding talent and knew a gentleman when they met one. It dispelled much ignorance about India and Indians and focussed attention on many of their flagrant wrongs whose very existence had before been denied. The most important outcome, however, was to bring home to Gandhiji two hard truths that changed his political outlook and course of action in the years to come. Both were a gift of the Transvaal press.

The *Star* of Johannesburg, the most influential organ of the English speaking Uitlanders, accepting practically the whole of his argument expressed its highest appreciation of his "moderation, impartiality and skill which would assuredly surprise many complacent gentlemen who believe that the possession of the white skin is inseparable from a higher average of general intelligence than can be possessed by any one with a darker cuticle".

Mr Gandhi proves clearly enough that such prosperity as Natal has achieved is due in a large measure to the presence of Indians; that ethnologically the relationship between the Caucasian and the Indian is a close one; and that in the opinion of many eminent authorities there is nothing in the national character to disqualify them from exercising political rights. . . . The real Indian, as we know him in Natal or in any other part of South Africa, does not deserve the indiscriminate and vulgar abuse which Mr Gandhi quotes. . . .

The question, however, was not, it contended, ethnological or abstract but political and concrete.

. . . There are many Indians of the stamp of Mr Gandhi who are doubtless eminently qualified to exercise the fullest possible franchise in any self-governing community. But . . . the fact remains that it would be suicidal for Natal to admit an equality which does not exist in fact, and could not be safely admitted even if it did. *It is true that one Indian represents Finsbury in*

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the Imperial Parliament, it is also true that 250 *millions of his compatriots are dominated to all intents and purposes by a British garrison, and, as Mr Gandhi doubtless very well knows, it is the latter and not the former fact which determines the position of Indians amongst the people of the world* . . . the whole question, as it appears to the public men of Natal, and for that matter of South Africa, is whether the Colony is to be ruled by blacks or by whites. If this question be answered in the latter sense it is obvious enough that Indians must be rigidly excluded from the franchise . . . there is the less to be gained by arguing the point, inasmuch as under no conceivable circumstances is it likely to undergo modification. If we may venture upon a homely piece of advice, Mr Gandhi may very well save his breath to cool his porridge. He, or men like him, may, and probably will, stir up disaffection—more than that they never can do. If they are wise, they will abandon all efforts to achieve the impossible and will concentrate themselves upon securing just and humane treatment for their compatriots throughout Africa, an endeavour which . . . will not be wasted, and in which they may count upon the sympathy and support of every unprejudiced white.[87]

Gandhiji always esteemed an opponent who was not diplomatic. He preferred brutal frankness to glozing over the bitter truth by double-talk. Stripped of pungency the *Star's* argument boiled down to this. While no risk would be taken that would jeopardise the white hegemony, that section of English opinion for which it spoke could be counted upon giving him support in his fight against some of the worst disabilities and abuses under which the Indians laboured. On his part Gandhiji could easily adduce facts and figures to remove the *Star's* apprehension in regard to Indians' ever acquiring through the franchise power to menace politically the South African whites. They had no such ambition. All they desired was a fair and just treatment and freedom from any racial stigma to pursue their legitimate avocations in peace and with self-respect. He welcomed the blunt statement from the *Star* that no amount of verbal argument, however, conclusive, would weigh with the British so long as a small British garrison could dominate and if need be keep in chains the whole Indian Continent. The conclusion was forced upon him that just Indian demands would be conceded only if his people developed strength that no force of arms could subdue. It took him nearly a decade to discover the way.

In an article captioned, "The Light of Asia", the *Critic* of Johannesburg, which was later to provide him one of his closest colleagues in his Satyagraha struggle in South Africa, admitted that India was the cradle of civilisation and had excelled in various walks of life "when the Briton, the Gaul and the Teuton were steeped in barbarism, painted blue, or arrayed in the skin of wild beasts", but argued that the bulk of the Indian labouring class in South Africa being mostly "low-caste", who were condemned to be "a servile race" by the "caste system" of the

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Hindoos, the evil from which they suffered was not from without but from within.

If then his fellow countrymen have condemned themselves by unbreakable laws to a menial lot . . . how can he (Mr Gandhi) expect us to help them? . . . The class of Hindoos which swarms in Natal and elsewhere is necessarily of the lowest caste and, under the circumstances, do what they will, they can never raise themselves into positions which command the respect even of their own fellows.[88]

Indians were certainly entitled to be treated with kindness and justice. But on the other hand they had to conform to regulations, sanitary and other, necessary for the welfare of the community. "The stern arm of the Inspector of Nuisances must be stretched for their benefit, let us hope. Oriental races are—with the exception of the higher-classes—recklessly careless as a rule both as regards personal and general habits of cleanliness."

Deploring the irrational colour prejudice of the whites, to which Gandhiji had drawn pointed attention, the *Critic* proceeded, "True, to many, 'Injuns is pizen'!, for ignorance is always dogmatic, but every educated man knows that an Indian is no more a "nigger" than an Englishman—and there is no more affinity between him and the Ethiopian than between a black horse and a black cow." Public opinion was too strong in England, it concluded, to countenance any injustice or persecution, but if the author of the "Open Letter" wished to do good, he had better

> begin his work at home and start a course of lectures and addresses among his own countrymen. . . . Whoever wishes to improve his fellow, must begin by making him understand his own faults and difficulties. . . . The Light of Asia has grown dim with ages and needs the assistance of the snuffers. Let Mr Gandhi try their effect in Natal.[89]

The barbed shaft penetrated the core of Gandhiji's heart. The truth burst upon his mind with the force of revelation that so long as India allowed a section of her people to be treated as *pariahs*, so long must her sons be prepared to be treated as *pariahs* abroad. To destroy the twin evil of "untouchability" and insanitation root and branch became his passion. So seared was his soul that as a token of expiation for the treatment meted out to the "outcastes" he ultimately took to scavenging, declaring that India's independence could wait but not the eradication of the curse of "untouchability".

The transformation wrought in the Natal scene by the movement that Gandhiji had launched barely six months earlier had not remained unnoticed in the Cape. Interpreting Gandhiji's "Open Letter" as a sign of the times and portent of the things to come, the *Cape Times* observed that for good or for evil the "Asiatic" had come to stay and the question

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of his position in South Africa would have to be faced in the near future. In the two Dutch Republics action had aleady been taken against him. The Free State had a prohibitive poll-tax. In the Transvaal the Indians had been forced into locations. In the Cape itself a Mayoral Conference had demanded legislation along the lines laid down by the report made by a Committee representing the Town Councils of Cape Town, Kimberley, Port Elizabeth and East London, asking for the segregation of "Indians, Coolies and Chinese". Further north the Chartered Company was construing the Municipal regulations to establish and conduct locations as applicable alike to "natives" of the country and to Indian immigrants. "It would have been strange indeed", the Cape organ observed,

> if in such circumstances an Indian Moses had not arisen to deliver his people from what is considered the threatened bondage. With the hour came the man in the person of a Mr M. K. Gandhi, a barrister-at-law. . . . During his brief residence in the country Mr Gandhi has been engaged in a vigorous agitation against the proposed disfranchisement of his fellow-Indians with what measure of success will shortly be made known. . . . It is to Mr Gandhi's credit that he disdains to be a party to the prosecution of any agitation in England. . . . Whatever relief might be afforded by Imperial intervention would be but temporary. . . . The writer, therefore, applies himself to the task of educating European sentiment up to a keener appreciation of the advantages of the Indian settlement. The magnitude of the task must have been apparent to the most casual observer of Natal methods and customs.[90]

Castigating the short-sighted and selfish greed of the money-making employer class of Natal "to which Colony South Africa is indebted for the introduction of the undesirable element into our political, economical and social problems", it went on to say:

> Natal presents the curious spectacle of a country entertaining a supreme contempt for the very class of people she can least do without. Imagination can only picture the commercial paralysis which would inevitably attend the withdrawal of the Indian population from that Colony. And yet the Indian is the most despised of the creatures. . . .

In the circumstances it feared that the appeal to the "best British traditions" or even to the "principle of justice and morality" was likely to have but little chance with Colonists, "who see in the swarthy swarm a standing menace to their own political and commercial superiority". Undoubtedly the Indians had their redeeming virtues, to which their commercial success was due. "They are thrifty, as the Natal Savings Bank returns show; they abstain totally from drink; they do not gamble." It had also to be conceded that in these respects "they set an example which might well be emulated by others higher

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in the scale of modern civilisation", but it was the possession of these very qualities, it candidly admitted, that made the Indian question difficult of solution by bringing it into conflict with the problem of the "poor white". "No liberal colonists would refuse the full citizenship to an educated gentleman like Mr Gandhi, but it is necessary in a new country even more than in an old one to control the influx of an alien population". If anyone could find a way out "short of committing an act of injustice to a people who are subjects with us of the same empire", it concluded, he would have entitled himself "to the gratitude of South Africa at large".[91]

9

The Natal Indian Congress under Gandhiji's direction had worked quietly. While he abhorred secrecy, he had shunned all publicity for it until it was assured of a permanent existence. Not even an announcement had accordingly been made officially as to its formation. But an incident occurred in the latter half of 1895 that made the limelight beat upon it.

In the first week of August, 1895, a case came up before Captain Lucas, Resident Magistrate of Durban, in which Poonoosamy Pather, with three others was charged with assaulting one Mooroogasamy Pillai. A day before the final hearing, Mohamed Ibrahim Asgar (Asgara), a butcher and ex-member of the Natal Indian Congress, being subpoenaed as a witness for the Crown by the Resident Magistrate, deposed that on August 12, he was sent for by Muhammad Kamruddin to Moosa's office, where in the presence of Kamruddin, Dada Abdulla, and Dawud Muhammad and two or three strangers, he was asked by Rungasamy Padayachi, a store-keeper, whether it was his intention to give evidence for Mr. Pillai, the complainant in the assault case, and if so, what was its nature. From the questions put he understood that they required him not to give evidence favourable to Pillai. He alleged that Rungasamy had by threats intimidated him from giving evidence.

The assault, it was stated in the course of the trial, had taken place in a public street with people passing. But the only person, who was called as witness during the trial, said that he did not see any assault but "heard them using tongues". Nor was there any evidence as to the place, manner, or the persons committing the alleged assault. But Padayachi was one of the Vice-Presidents of the Congress, and Captain Lucas was an ex-military officer. With a soldier's indifference to the processes of law, he jumped from Asgara's unsupported statement, to the conclusion that the Natal Indian Congress was involved in the case and was interested in shielding the accused from the penalty of the law. On August 13, he delivered judgment convicting all.

The defendants appealed to the Supreme Court. They urged that

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the Magistrate had allowed himself to be influenced by statements that were not supported by or even referred to in the evidence, and that the verdict was wholly against the weight of evidence.

Police Magistrate Waller next issued a summons to Rungasamy Padayachi. The hearing was first fixed for August 15 but at the request of the counsel for the accused it was postponed until the 19th of August, the accused being let out on a bail of £25.

At this juncture Captain Lucas, whose jurisdiction was concurrent with Mr Waller's, decided to take matters in hand himself. Without any summons from the Court he sent for Asgara, wrote to Waller that the case had been withdrawn and the papers sent back to the Clerk of the Peace, and on the strength of Asgara's previous statement before Waller had a fresh summons issued to Rungasamy Padayachi.

Faced with prosecution for the second time Padayachi sought Gandhiji's intervention as lawyer rather than in his capacity as the Hon. Secretary of the Natal Congress.[92] Accordingly, when on September 4, the case came up for hearing, Mr Miller appearing for the defendant and Mr Calder for the Crown, Gandhiji also attended the court.

Captain Lucas had never taken kindly to Gandhiji ever since on his first appearance in court in the Colony ordered by him the Indian Barrister had refused to remove his turban and preferred to walk out. (see p. 295) Eying him sternly Captain Lucas enquired whether he appeared in the case. He did not, Gandhiji retorted.[93] The hearing was continued on September 12 and 13.

On the third day of the hearing, finding Gandhiji taking notes as before, and helping Mr Miller, Captain Lucas insultingly asked why he was there without robes "as if he were Mr Miller's clerk". He was surprised, he remarked, that being an English barrister he should be doing this.

> If he wanted to appear in the case he ought to be robed and at his proper place, not doing the work of an attorney's clerk. This was not an English barrister's work. It might be that there was perhaps some other reason why Mr Gandhi found it necessary to be there.[94]

Upon Miller asking whether there was any harm in "Mr Gandhi doing clerk's work for him (Mr Miller)", the Magistrate remarked, "I can see through it perfectly well."

The shocking behaviour of Captain Lucas towards a member of the Natal bar outraged even some Europeans. "ONLOOKER" wrote to the *Natal Mercury*:

> I should like to enquire by virtue of what prerogative, whether that of a magistrate or a gentleman, or an ex-officer in Her Majesty's service, Captain Lucas should address such questions to Mr Gandhi as he is reported to have done in open court. . . . The wonder to me is that Mr Gandhi did not enquire of Capt. Lucas how far it concerned him to pry into his business. If every barrister sitting in a court of justice at Home, . . . were, because he

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happened to be writing, to be interrogated in the insolent manner Mr Gandhi was, I think the English journals would very soon take the matter up.

He hoped that "Mr Gandhi for the sake of the profession to which he belongs will not let the matter rest but report it in the proper quarter".[95]

No sooner had the two cases received publicity than a cry for the blood of the Congress went up in the South African press. "It would appear," wrote the *Natal Advertiser* on September 21, 1895,

that a large and active association of a political character exists among the Indians of the Colony. . . . An organisation of this kind cannot fail to make itself felt, especially as those at its head are . . . in direct communication for political purposes with England and India.[96]

The *Natal Advertiser* commented that "the existence of the Indian Congress had been discovered, only through an accident".[97] The discovery, wrote the *Natal Witness*, had come "at a most opportune moment, if only the Government will turn the opportunity to advantage". It had shown what lay in store for the Colony if the Indians should acquire political influence.

It has long been felt that our law courts are dishonoured by the wholesale perjury committed whenever an Indian case is before them. . . . We now find that perjury is not only recognised as a fine art and a useful ally by individuals, but is countenanced and ordered by an organisation with branches all over the Colony.[98]

It urged the Government "to leave no means (*sic*) unturned" to discover what the political objects of the Congress were. If they prosecuted enquiries "diligently, with due caution, and systematically", it suggested,

they will find that there has of late been a *rapprochement* between the Indians and the natives not hitherto known, and they will find, too, that the more crafty of the Indians are fomenting discontent amongst the natives by, amongst other things, contrasting their own position as free men with what they represent to the native as a condition of lifelong subjection.[99]

As soon as Gandhiji read these tirades he wrote to the *Advertiser*, taking strong exception to its strictures while the case against the Congress was *sub judice*. "Were I not afraid of running the risk of committing contempt of court, I would make a few remarks on the circumstances under which the Congress has been connected with the case. I am, therefore, obliged to postpone any remarks on the matter till the case is over". He could not, however, let go unchallenged the statement that the Natal Indian Congress had been functioning as a secret society.

While the Congress was yet in process of formation the *Natal Witness*

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announced the fact, and, if I am not mistaken, the paragraph announcing it was copied by you. . . . No attempts have been made to keep it secret. On the other hand, its organisers even invited those Europeans who were considered to be sympathetic either to join it or attend its fortnightly meetings.[100]

To remove any false impression that the journal's remarks might create, he restated the objects of the Congress and forwarded copies of the rules, the list of members during the first year, and the first annual report of the Congress ending 22nd August, 1895.

The *Natal Advertiser*, however, persisted in its accusation. Admitting that reports about the formation of the Congress had appeared in the press, it maintained that the information then published conveyed no idea of the "actual character" of the Congress.

> The objectionable feature about the Natal Indian Congress . . . is (that it) has been working for many months in the dark. . . . It is not to the advantage of any community that political organisations should work long in the dark.[101]

The gross unfairness of this in the teeth of known facts and the most categorical denials on Gandhiji's part proved too much for the *Natal Mercury*. "We think a great deal too much is being made," it wrote on September 28,

> of the existence of the Natal Indian Congress. We have known of it since it was started, and reference was made to it at the time, if we are not mistaken, in all the Natal newspapers, and certainly in more than one. The Congress may have gone about its business quietly, but we cannot see that it is in any sense a secret political association proceeding on unconstitutional lines.[102]

Suppression of free speech among the Indians on political subjects affecting themselves or even the Colony, it warned, would be "to grossly violate one of the most sacred rights of every man, woman and child who lives under the British flag", which "we should never think of advocating". Her Majesty's subjects enjoyed equality of status irrespective of race, creed and colour. "So long as the Indians do not plot treason or sedition, by all means let them have their political societies, and the greatest safeguard against treasonable or seditious practices is the absence of any restrictions on freedom of speech or liberty of opinion."[103]

The *Cape Argus*, though it regarded the formation of the Congress as a "calamity" for South Africa, did not hesitate to tell Captain Lucas that he was singularly ill advised to attack the Indian Political Association as he had done.

> So far as they confine themselves to politics the Indians are perfectly within their rights and they will simply take the Magistrate's censure as a tribute to their strength.[104]

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The tempest, however, continued to rage. A correspondent signing himself as 'H' began to write in the columns of the *Natal Mercury* that an Indian interpreter in one of the Magistrate's court was responsible for the initiation and foundation of the "organisation termed Indian Congress"; that it was in fact he who had framed its rules, that he had taken a principal part in the getting up of the Memorial to Her Majesty; and it was at the instance of this "wily interpreter" that Gandhiji had been "elected secretary to the Congress at a salary of £300 per annum".[105]

No one knew whether this Daniel was an Indian or a European.[106] Repudiating totally these aspersions, Gandhiji pointed out in the *Natal Mercury* of September 25, that "the Congress was formed chiefly by the efforts of Abdulla Haji Adam"; that he himself had been present at all the meetings of the Congress, and he knew that "no Civil Servant took part in these meetings"; and finally that the responsibility of drafting the rules was entirely his and not even a single Civil Servant "saw the Memorials before they were printed and ready for distribution".[107] As regards his being "a paid Secretary of the Congress", the fact on the contrary was that he also in common with other members contributed his humble share to its funds. "No one pays me anything whatever on behalf of the Congress. Some Indians do pay me yearly retainers. . . . There is nothing that the Congress has to conceal; only it does not blow its own trumpet."[108]

But it was no use. He was loaded with fresh charges. It was alleged that under his leadership the Congress was conspiring to fight the Government; that it set up Indian labourers to agitate against their grievances; that he extracted money from them and from Indian traders, promising to help them obtain relief, and used the funds for his own purpose.

The hearing of the Padayachi case before the Durban Magistrate's court day after day had aroused great indignation among the Indians. To canalise the rising tide Gandhiji organised a series of meetings under the auspices of the Natal Indian Congress. At one of these, held at the Parsi Rustomji Building in Durban on September 28, 1895, addressing a gathering of nearly one thousand persons, he told them that now that the existence of the Natal Indian Congress had become "fully known" the least answer they could make was thereafter to be punctual in paying their subscriptions and to raise an amount of at least £4,000 to meet adequately the Congress requirements. This target could easily be reached, he suggested, if all merchants volunteered to pay five shillings on every £100 worth of goods sold. He further told them that he would be going to India at the end of the year. He would then try to persuade a good number of Indian barristers to come to Natal. The Durban Magistrate's filibuster thus, instead of having a damping effect, gave a fillip to the Congress activity.

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On October 2, after an eleven-day trial, Captain Lucas delivered his judgment, attesting his conviction that,

pressure was brought to bear on complainant by an association of which the prisoner is a member and complainant was at one time — *that is the Indian Congress.* There can be no doubt that complainant was called to Moosa's office, where some, if not all, the leading men of the Congress were present. This association, it may be assumed, was formed for political purposes. If so, it has from the evidence in this case extended its sphere by using its influence and power to interfere with and thwart the ends of justice. *I may go so far as to say that . . . the Indian Congress is of the nature of an association of conspiracy, pernicious and fraught with danger to the whole community in this colony of whatever race.* The prisoner may be only a tool in the hands of this association, but that in no way lessens his guilt.[109]

Convicted on the charge of intimidation and sentenced to six months' imprisonment with hard labour, Padayachi immediately applied for revision before the Supreme Court.

The judgment in the Padayachi case placed the Natal Indian Congress in grave peril. "If this was really the case," wrote the *Natal Advertiser*, "the censure which Captain Lucas passed on the Congress as a pernicious and a dangerous institution, will not be regarded as a whit too severe."[110] Three days later it again wrote that if it could be proved that the "Indian Congress" was resorting to "wrong and suspicious practices", then "swift and decisive action for its punishment would be justified".[111]

Without loss of a moment Gandhiji took up the guage. If the Congress had attempted "even in an indirect manner" to tamper with a witness, he wrote to the *Advertiser*, it would "certainly deserve suppression". He would, however, for the time being, content himself with repeating the statement that it had not made any such attempt. The only witness who was asked questions about the Congress during the trial had denied that it had anything to do with the matter. "If the doings of men in their private capacity were to be fathered upon the association they may belong to, then I venture to think that almost any charge could be proved against any association."[112]

The *Natal Witness* and *The South African Telegraph* went even one better. "Mr Advocate Gandhi," the *Witness* remarked, "did not look particularly happy" at Captain Lucas's remarks. "The sooner this gentleman gets the money he wants from the Indian community, and clears for his native country, Guam, or Britain, the better it will be for himself, and the Colony." Now that the Magistrate had after "careful investigation" declared that there was a body that had set itself "to defeat the ends of justice", it was "the bounden duty of the Government to institute a rigorous enquiry into the matter", and if anything approaching the allegations made during the trial of Padayachi was

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proved, the Congress

ought to be broken up without delay, and its members punished as severely as the law allows. Further, it is the bounden duty of the Law Society to demand an explanation from Mr Gandhi of his connection with this society. An advocate is an officer of the Supreme Court, and the idea of his having anything to do with defying justice . . . is simply intolerable. What is more, the particular Inn of which Mr Gandhi is a member at Home should be informed of all the circumstances of the case and asked to investigate it.[113]

Supporting the suggestion for the suppression of the Congress, the *South African Telegraph* published the following from one of its correspondents:

It is a known fact that the coloured men of India are very much more dangerous . . . than those of Africa. Our coloured men are *sometimes troublesome* . . . they sometimes rebel and secretly prepare for rebellion, but for the rest they act manly and openly, and when they require a chastisement they take it as men and acquiesce in their defeat. Not so the Indians. Their sneaking nature has provided them with an uncontrollable desire for secret intrigues, conspiracies and traitorous attacks on the authority to which they pretend calmly to submit. . . . *Such a society we now have in our midst, and it is our bounden duty to take care in time that it does not lead to calamities similar to those which have so often occurred in India.*[114]

In the meantime, the gentleman signing himself 'H' had, it was learnt, gained the ear of a "certain prominent gentlemen of Maritzburg". Reiterating his previous statements with further embellishments, he wrote in the *Natal Mercury* of October 6, that the "wily interpreter" referred to in his previous letters, was a "prominent agitator" in the Indian movement, "which if successful would mean the outvoting of the Europeans of this Colony by the Indians imported into this Colony for the particular delectation of the sugar planters"; that he was "making use of his position for giving information on public matters to the Congress", and ought not therefore, to remain in his position as a Government servant, and finally, that Gandhiji was a "paid agitator" and "in signing himself as Hon. Secretary N.I.C." Gandhiji was "misleading the public".

It is to be hoped, that not only the legislators of this Colony, but every European will stand up, if necessary, to capsize the little apple-cart Messrs Gandhi and Co. are wheeling along and that the pariahs of India, who were imported at the colonial expense and who are quite contented without the interference of that 'firm', shall be kept in their place. . . . To show the danger, how is it that Sepoys and Mussulmans who are at deadly enmity in their own country, Bombay, Mauritius, &c. are now (in Natal) working together with such zealous fervour?[115]

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Referring to the October meeting at the Parsi Rustomji Building that Gandhiji had addressed, "H" exclaimed; "Mr. Gandhi has promised the Indians that he will obtain for them another three Indian barristers. What will Natal then come to?"[116] He followed it up with a threat. "I have every proof and I can lay same before Government when necessary."[117]

Gandhiji was in a dilemma. He saw the danger in allowing the smear campaign that was assiduously being worked up against the Natal Indian Congress to go unchecked. But he was prevented from dealing with the matter at any length in the press as the judgment in which the Congress had been condemned was under appeal. At the same time if he kept silent, the strictures on the Congress, being merely *obiter dicta* of the Magistrate, might not be fully dealt with by the Supreme Court in its judgment on the appeal. After much thought, on October 21 he addressed a letter to the Colonial Secretary. In it he showed from extracts from the evidence that had appeared in the press, and which he enclosed with his letter, that (a) not only had the Congress never summoned Asgara or any other person before it to prevent him from giving evidence but that the presiding Magistrate had "absolutely no grounds for making such remarks. During the examination, cross examination and re-examination of the witness, Asgara, the Congress had not even been mentioned. It was only after the examination was finished that the Magistrate had asked the questions about the Congress". (b) From the questions and answers it was clear that there was no meeting of the Congress during the week in which the intimidation was alleged to have taken place. (c) The witness was said to have been summoned to Moosa's office on August 12, where some members of the Congress were present. There he was asked certain questions about the case, and this the Magistrate had connected with the Congress in spite of the witness's denial that the Congress meetings were held in Moosa's office. He had received no circular inviting him to the meeting at Moosa's office. Congress meetings were held in the Congress Hall, in terms of the circulars that had been produced during the trial. He did not attend any of these.

The only point that could in any way be used to support the Magistrate's conclusion was the fact that three out of the six or seven men, alleged to have been present at Moosa's office, were members of the Congress. But here again, not a particle of evidence had been produced during the trial to show that the Congress organisation had in any way tried to interfere with the case. No substantial evidence was adduced to support the Magistrate's remarks in his judgment in the case of Poonoosamy Pather and three others that the defendants were members of the Congress and had been backed up by the Congress.

I beg to assure the Government that the intention of the organisers of

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the Congress is to make the Congress an institution useful to both the communities in the Colony and a medium of interpretation of the feelings of the Indians on questions affecting them, and thus to help the existing Government and not to embarrass it, if it could embarrass it at all. . . . I may state that the Congress has never yet interfered in any court matters between Indians and Indians. . . . No individual member or members can do anything on behalf of, or in the name of, the Congress without the sanction of a majority of the members of the Congress assembled in accordance with the rules of the Congress, which can only meet on a written notification from the Honorary Secretary.

He concluded: If the Government were satisfied that the Congress had nothing to do with the case in question they should make some public notification of the fact; If on the other hand it remained suspect, he pressed "for an enquiry".[118]

Hardly had this letter been despatched when the Supreme Court quashed the conviction in Poonoosamy Pather and others *vs.* Regina. Mr Beaumont, the acting Chief Justice, declared there was no evidence whatever to support the charge, "the evidence of the plaintiff broke down right and left" and therefore, "it did seem extraordinary that the Magistrate on evidence of that kind should come to a conclusion that the assault had been committed by these four persons. . . . *He thought the Magistrate had allowed his mind to run away with him by ideas which had nothing to do with the case*".[119] The case called "loudly for interference of the higher court".

A month after, the Full Bench of the Supreme Court set aside the conviction in the Padayachi case also (November 27, 1895), the Chief Justice remarking that "there is not a particle of evidence which would warrant me in asking a jury to convict".[120] Sir Walter Wragg remarked that the case "bristled with irregularities" from the very inception, the summons issued by the Clerk of the Peace "was insufficient and bad in law". Mr Justice Beaumont said that "he would like to see the whole thing quashed". The Crown Solicitor being called admitted that when asked for advice he had advised against the action of the Resident Magistrate.

The appeal was forthwith accepted and the accused acquitted.

The Natal Indian Congress thus came out of the ordeal unscathed and the machinations of those who had sought to compass its ruin recoiled upon themselves. The severe animadversions of the highest tribunal in the land on the Resident Magistrate of Durban were widely reported and commented on in the press, and brought the Congress to the notice of even those who might otherwise have never heard of it.

The *Cape Times* was the first to point attention to the significance of the rise of the Natal Indian Congress. Commenting on the judgment in the Padayachi case and the report of the 29th of September meeting of the Durban Indians that Gandhiji had addressed, it wrote:

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It shows that the time has passed when the child of India will be content to remain — at all events, in the responsibly governed colonies — in a position of servile dependence upon those to whom he owes his presence in this quarter of the Empire. He claims to have arrived at the years of discretion, at a period when his political and social aspirations should be recognised. . . . Our correspondent states that at Sunday's meeting Mr Gandhi referred to the good work accomplished by the Society in England. . . . Thus we have to reckon with an Indian Society as one of the coming political forces in this country. . . . To affect to ignore its existence would be folly. . . . Mr Gandhi's followers are capable of being a power, for good or evil, and prudent politicians will not fail to take note of them.[121]

The Natal Congress was not a secret organisation any more than its counterpart, the Indian National Congress, it went on to say. Similarly suspected of harbouring "some more sinister motive than appeared on the surface" when it assembled for the first time in the city of Bombay a decade ago, that "new parliament of Hindustan" had "shown and failed to show various things" but the "sinister motive" it had not shown. Similarly, the charges against the Natal Congress also, the Cape organ predicted, would be found to be baseless.

. . . There is something Indian about this success in keeping a secret. We all remember the shudder with which England received the news of 'the grease-smeared trees in Behar', and how the portent recalled memories of the mysterious *chupatties* sent round to usher in the Mutiny. The grease-smeared trees came to nothing and perhaps we need not attach too much importance to the fact that the Indians of Natal preferred to keep their own counsel until their society had found its legs.[122]

In a year membership had reached 228 and branches in a dozen centres were actively engaged.

That the members are drawn from other than the banana class of coolie, is apparent from the fact that the minimum monthly subscription is five shillings, and that during the year just closed an amount of £616 was subscribed into the Congress coffers, *a nett financial result which puts to shame the pecuniary support usually accorded to the political associations of European South Africa.* . . . Mr Gandhi demands an aggregate of £4,000 to put the Congress on a sure foundation, and with this view proposes that subscriptions should be made payable for the whole year in advance. *Evidently Mr Gandhi knows his people. But does not Mr Brydone wish he could do the like with the South African Political Association?*[123]

It pleaded for a compromise to end the *impasse*. It was in October last, just over twelve months since the Franchise Amendment Bill was specially reserved for the Royal sanction or veto. Veto was bound to cause deep resentment in white Natal, which regarded the disfranchise-

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ment of the Indians as a *sine qua non* of European supremacy. That made the position of the Imperial Government one of peculiar difficulty.

The Indian races claim the right to trade and to labour with the full status of British subjects throughout the British Empire and in allied States, and the refusal of the franchise privilege, and the compulsory return of indentured Indians, *strike a fatal blow* at any recognition of the claim so far as Natal is concerned. We sympathise with our Natal cousins in their discomfort at finding their Indian population numerically equal to themselves. But the Indians are entitled to retort: 'You brought us here', and to claim that for many years past they have been regarded as essential to the industrial prosperity of the Colony. We earnestly hope that some compromise will be devised. To deprive a man of a privilege bluntly and openly (*sic*) because of his colour is repugnant to the spirit of freedom and fair dealing which the British Empire, not the British Isles only, plumes itself upon. In this Colony, at all events so far as the Parliamentary franchise is concerned, we have guarded against any such invidious distinction by the institution of a property and educational qualification which at some cost to white liberalism meets the essential white purpose. Might not some similar device offer a way out of the present *impasse* both for the Home Government and Natal?[124]

The Congress would have accepted this as a compromise. But the Natal Government was bent upon achieving its end by a device devious and clumsy.

There was still another ordeal in store for the Congress. Of this more later.

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CHAPTER XIX

"NEW LAMPS FOR OLD"

1

BEACH GROVE Villa where Gandhiji took up his residence in Durban was an unpretentious, semi-detached, double-storeyed building with an iron front gate, a side entrance with a passage, and a verandah under the balcony facing the Durban Bay. Harry Escombe, the Attorney-General, lived next door. All the neighbours were Europeans. Lounge, drawing room, pantry, bathroom and other conveniences were all downstairs. In a yard at the back, were a swing and horizontal bars for exercise.

It was not lavishly furnished. In the lounge, which was carpeted, were a sofa, two arm chairs, a round table with a cover, and a bookcase. Conspicuous in the bookcase were the writings of Tolstoy, Madam Blavatsky and Edward Maitland, publications of Esoteric Christian Union and the Vegetarian Society, the *Koran* and the Bible, literature on Christian, Hindu and other religions, and biographies of Indian national leaders. The dining room had an oblong table, eight bentwood chairs and a corner what-not. Two out of the five bedrooms upstairs were furnished with wardrobes. There were only hard wooden beds to lie on — no springs, nor mattresses, only bare board.

Here were held preliminary discussions that led to the formation of the Natal Indian Congress. Leading Indians and merchants dropped in in the evening, and occasionally a few Europeans. Among the latter were O. J. Askew, and W. Spencer Walton, first Secretary of the General South African Mission, that had its headquarters in Ash Lane; and other missionaries, who were trying to convert Gandhiji to Christianity.

Not far from this house, at the corner of the West Street, the principal thoroughfare of Durban, was Dada Abdulla and Co.'s shop. It was situated next to Messrs Harvey Greenacre and Co., the foremost European business concern in Durban, owned by Benjamin Greenacre, the earliest Mayor of Durban, who some years later was followed in that office by his eldest son, Walter Greenacre. The business premises were on the ground floor. The upper storey served for residence. The large room on the first floor, furnished in rich oriental style, was used to receive visitors, where the host and the visitors made themselves comfortable by reclining on cushions on the carpeted floor the Indian way.

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Within earshot of the West Street corner were Gandhiji's rooms, where assisted by a few clerks he carried on his legal work. Both the premises and the aids were used for Congress work also. His "Confidential Clerk", Vincent Lawrence, was a Tamil-speaking South Indian Christian, who later, as a member of his household, lived with him in Beach Grove Villa for four and a half years. Both he and his wife were registered members of the Burghers' Roll. A devout Roman Catholic of the third order of St. Francis, he received a gold medal from Pope John XXIII for his services to the Church. Stout in spirit though bed-ridden, at 93 his memory is sharp and clear and he still writes a firm, beautiful handwriting so minute that it has sometimes to be deciphered with the help of a magnifying glass.

Incharge of the Congress Office was Joseph Royappan, a colonial-born Indian Christian youth, son of freed indentured parents. One of the first to join the Natal Indian Congress, he by his devotion and ability had, while still a lad, attracted Gandhiji's attention. Gandhiji helped him to go to England, study law, and return a full-fledged Barrister. When the Satyagraha struggle was launched, he suspended his practice and threw himself into it. Tall and erect as a granite pillar, he had a magnificent voice, which drew and held even crowds of whites spell-bound whenever he sang. He never wavered in his allegiance. Nicknamed "Royappan, the incorrigible", he fully answered to that description when he visited Gandhiji in the Ashram at Sabarmati in the nineteen-twenties. He died in June, 1960.

Gandhiji's multifarious activities left him hardly a moment to attend to his domestic affairs. It was with some difficulty that he could manage even his morning and evening constitutional, which with him was a must. The household was run on the simplest lines. Strictly vegetarian, fare was of the plainest. Still, as there were often European guests and entertainment had to be in consonance with Gandhiji's notions of the prestige attaching to an Indian barrister at that time, expenses ran high. To free himself from such cares he, therefore, invited his boyhood friend, Sheikh Mehtab. He came from Rajkot and was installed in the house with everything found, and occasionally a little pocket money. He needed and asked for nothing else. Believing that he had reformed, Gandhiji trusted him implicitly.

But Mehtab had not changed. He managed to poison Gandhiji's mind against one of the office clerks, of whom he was jealous. The poor man, finding his honesty suspect, left heart-broken. Still Gandhiji continued to trust his boyhood friend blindly.

On weekdays he used to go to the courts at about 9 a.m. and return home for lunch at one. One noon a man, whom he had taken as a substitute for his old Gujarati cook on leave, sought him out in the court, and said:

"Please come home at once. There is a surprise for you."

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According to his wont Gandhiji used to treat him as a member of the household. "What is it? Please tell me," he answered. "Don't you see this is not the time for me to go home."

"Please come, or you will regret it."

Gandhiji accompanied him home.

As he mounted the steps the man pointed to Sheikh Mehtab's room and whispered, "See, what is inside."

The door was closed and bolted from within.

I saw it all. I knocked at the door. No reply! I knocked heavily so as to make the very walls shake. The door was opened. I saw a prostitute inside. I asked her to leave the house, never to return.

Her companion also was bidden to clear out.

Mehtab turned defiantly. "I will expose you," he thundered.

"You can do your worst. I have nothing to hide," Gandhiji blazed forth, "but out you go from here this moment."

As Mehtab was on the point of manhandling him, Vincent Lawrence arrived and grabbed Mehtab from behind. Gandhiji separated them.

Taken aback, Mehtab glowered at them.

Turning to Lawrence Gandhiji said : "Please go to the Superintendent of Police, pay him my compliments and report that a person living with me has misbehaved himself and refuses to leave my house."

Quick to realise that the game was up, Mehtab apologised, implored Gandhiji not to inform the police and left the house.

The cook also asked to be allowed to go. "I cannot stay in your house," he said. "You are credulous and easily misled. This is no place for me."

Gandhiji let him go to discover later that he was a scamp. It was as if Providence had sent him just to open his eyes.

Mehtab attached himself to one of the Indian merchants and never again crossed Gandhiji's threshold. But he remained devoted and loyal to him. Later he married and his wife joined the Satyagraha struggle. His two passions were delivering lectures and composing poems in Urdu. One of his poems, that he had entered in a prize competition for the best patriotic poem in an Indian language during the Satyagraha struggle, was published by Gandhiji in the *Indian Opinion*.

2

Gandhiji had hardly been four months in practice when one day a poor Tamilian in tattered clothes walked into his office and stood trembling and weeping, holding his head-gear in hands joined together in supplication. Two of his front teeth had nearly been knocked out and were protruding through the torn upper-lip, which streamed blood, soaking the whole length of his turban.

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He was an indentured labourer, Balasundaram by name. His European master had got enraged and lathered him. The Congress had not yet started work among the labourers and not many labourers were even aware of its existence. Not knowing where to turn for succour, the injured man had made for the Protector, whose house was close to his master's. Told to report himself at his office the next day and fearing lest he should be sent back to his irate master the poor man had run to Gandhiji, whose name he had heard. Gandhiji asked him to write out his complaint in his mother tongue and sent him to a doctor to obtain a certificate as to the nature of his injuries. Only white doctors were available those days. This one, however, did his duty undeflected by race prejudice. With the medical certificate, Gandhiji took Balasundaram to the Magistrate, who was deeply moved by his plight and sent him to the hospital for treatment, keeping his turban in the court as an exhibit.

Discharged in a few days, the man made straight for Gandhiji's office. He begged that his master be proceeded against. He wanted the contract of his indenture to be terminated.

Would he be satisfied if his indenture was transferred, Gandhiji asked. Not yet able to speak owing to his injuries, he nodded assent. Thereupon his master was approached. At first unwilling, he subsequently consented to the man's indenture being transferred.

Gandhiji sent Balasundaram to the Protector, who desired the man to be left at his office, promising to do his best.

In the meantime the master went up to the Protector and told him that he had changed his mind. "My wife finds the coolie valuable," he said. "She cannot forgo his services."

The Protector protected the employer. The "coolie", he wrote to Gandhiji, had "compromised". He had signed a document to the effect that he had no complaint to make. In the circumstances, he, the Protector, could not interfere.

Gandhiji was shocked. What business had the Protector to obtain such a document from the poor man?

Hardly had he recovered from the shock when the man himself came to his office crying. The Protector would not transfer him, he said. Gandhiji ran to the Protector's office. The latter produced the signed document. It was the man's fault, he said, he should not have signed it. In reply Gandhiji simply told him that he was going to ask the man to go to the Magistrate and lodge a complaint. The Protector said it would be no use in the face of the affidavit, which would be produced in the court and advised him to drop the matter.

Sick at heart, Gandhiji returned home and wrote a letter imploring the master to consent to the transfer. He refused. So Gandhiji took the injured man to the Magistrate, where a due deposition was made and the medical certificate produced. The Magistrate, who had seen

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the man with blood still streaming from his mouth, felt very angry and summoned the master.

Gandhiji did not plan to have the employer punished but only to secure Balasundaram's release from him, after all he had suffered at his hands. In the court, therefore, he offered to withdraw the complaint if the employer would consent to the transfer. The employer admitted the fact of the beating but pleaded grave provocation. This the man denied.

Sternly reprimanding the employer for taking the law into his hand and beating the poor man "as if he were a beast", the Magistrate told him that if he did not avail himself of the offer that had been made to him the consequences might be serious. With that he adjourned the court, giving the employer one day to make up his mind. On sober reflection the latter climbed down.

The Protector, however, raised a difficulty. He sent Gandhiji a note that unless he submitted the name of another European Employer that he, the Protector, could approve of, he would not consent to the transfer. Gandhiji approached that God's good man, O. J. Askew, who gladly agreed to take over Balasundaram's services. Convicting the employer-master, the Magistrate recorded that he had transferred the indenture to another employer.

Balasundaram had entered Gandhiji's office, his turban in hand. This was the practice enforced by the white employers whenever an indentured labourer or an Indian stranger appeared before them.

> A salute even with both hands was not sufficient. Balasundaram thought he should follow the practice even with me. . . . I felt humiliated and asked him to tie up his scarf. He did so, not without a certain hesitation, but I could perceive the pleasure on his face.

It wrung Gandhiji's heart. "It has always been a mystery to me," he records in his Autobiography, "how men can feel themselves honoured by the humiliation of their fellow beings."[1]

3

There were thousands of Balasundarams all over Natal and many times that number in other British colonial possessions. The indentured Indian labourer lay prostrate at his white master's feet, not dreaming even the possibility of any relief or rescue. The news about Balasundaram's case spread quickly from plantation to plantation. Its echoes reached even far off Madras from where the indentured labour for Natal was recruited. The fact that there was now some one who dared to stand up for them against their white masters filled them with "a joyful surprise" and inspired them with hope. A regular stream of indentured labourers began to pour into Gandhiji's office. The opportunity to serve them gave him supreme satisfaction.

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The Natal Government Railway was one of the biggest employers of Indian Indentured labour. Overworked and subjected to hardships and brutal ill-treatment beyond endurance, the labourers often preferred breaking stones in gaol to working on the railway. On top of this they were maligned and misrepresented in the white press. With no one to hold a watching brief for them, they were condemned unheard and even unawares, till Gandhiji came to their rescue.

In April, 1895, 71 of them were charged before Mr Dillon, the Magistrate, with thrashing the police. The railway authorities, it would seem, had, in order to reduce expenses, issued orders that instead of firewood they should be given coal. Unable to get their fires started without the firewood, the poor labourers had to get up at three in the morning to get their food cooked. They complained about it but their complaint went unheeded. They were consequently driven to scrounge for firewood and collect it from wherever they could.

On May 17, 1895, while they were going along with their bundles they were stopped by a "native" constable who proceeded to arrest them. Thereupon, it was alleged, "seven of them turned round with sticks" and thrashed him. P. C. Madden, the European constable, later went to the scene alone and effected the arrests without any resistance.

At the trial Mr Hammond of the Railway department defended the conduct of railway authorities, stating that the Government had decided to give the "coolies" coal and a small portion of wood, and stoves had been erected in their houses for the purpose. "There was nothing in their contracts to show that the Government was obliged to supply them with fuel and the issuing of it was only a concession."

Strongly dissenting, the Protector of Immigrants testified that he had visited the barracks, and it was quite impossible for the men to cook their food on the stoves; fuel would not burn in them. The men had continuously complained of it. He had written to Mr Hunter, the General Manager of the Railways, on the subject, and had received an answer that it would be seen to at once. "For 17 days past they had been without means of cooking their food and he thought these men were hardly dealt with."[2]

Delivering judgment, the Magistrate remarked that on the evidence the men were guilty of "taking that which they had no right to take, and afterwards behaving improperly to the police". But he felt strongly, he added, that they were

> labouring under an enormous grievance. They have been treated as badly as the Jews of ancient times, when they were made to obey Pharoah's orders and make bricks without straw. I am not going to give them any punishment whatever, and they can go.[3]

Gandhiji was present in the court during this trial. He was, there-

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fore, surprised two days later to find the proceedings reported in the *Natal Advertiser* thus:

On Friday night the police, who were set to ward the entrance to the works, observed a large batch of Indians coming towards the gate with portions of sleepers on their heads. On attempting to arrest them, 71 of their number turned round with sticks, tins, pieces of iron, and cooking utensils, and plied them freely on the police, making them fly for safety. P. C. Madden arrived on the scene with further assistance, and arrested seven of the ring leaders who were brought before Mr Dillon on Saturday morning.[4]

Gandhiji at once wrote to the *Advertiser* showing that every one of these statements was at variance not only with the facts but even with what had been stated by the witnesses concerned in the court. The portions of sleepers that the "coolies" were alleged to have been found carrying on their heads were never produced. Not a word was said in the course of evidence about "utensils and irons". Besides, "if all had bundles of sticks on their heads", it was "not easy to understand how they could carry utensils etc." Instead of "71 of their number" turning round to thrash the police,

the evidence went to show that the seven charged turned round with sticks and two of them incited to oppose. There was only one policeman at first, and that was the native constable. Then P. C. Madden alone, not with any assistance, came on the scene. While the native constable is alleged to have been resisted, P. C. Madden distinctly said he was not resisted at all.[5]

The report then went on to say:

The rest followed in a body, with some more added to their number, about a hundred waiting outside the court, and saying they would not leave until their colleagues were discharged. Three or four constables appeared in court with their faces bruised and their clothes torn.[6]

The evidence of Mr Mason, the Protector, "who knew what he was talking about", however was to the effect, Gandhiji pointed out, that "the rest" were under arrest, "and were going to be charged with desertion. They had gone now for the second time to Mr Mason to complain that they were starving."

As for the three or four constables appearing in the court "with their bruised faces, and their torn clothes",

the facts are that there was only the native constable, who said he was beaten with sticks. When asked if he could show any marks he said it was 'somewhere' on his head that nobody could see. He had no bruises. His clothes were neither torn, nor did he complain that they were. . . . P. C. Madden was the only other constable who gave evidence. But he was not interfered with, and he could give no evidence of his own knowledge as to the native constable having been beaten.

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This was not the first occasion, Gandhiji concluded, in which he had found "the facts in your reports mis-stated or exaggerated, and I am very sorry to say, whenever this has happened they have been mis-stated and exaggerated much to the disadvantage of the Indian community."

The *Advertiser* published Gandhiji's statement with the apology: "Mr Gandhi implies that any alleged 'mis-statements' or 'exaggerations' have been knowingly made with a view to prejudice the Indian community in the eyes of our readers. Such, however, is not the case. If they have occurred it has been quite unwittingly . . . without the slightest desire or intention to prejudicially affect one side or the other."[7]

In the following June 255 labourers of the Natal Railway again struck work. They complained they were receiving insufficient rations. According to the contract their rations should have been 1½ lbs. of rice daily, or for three days in the week in lieu of rice 2 lbs. of maize or meal. Their staple food being rice, however, they said, they could not take maize or meal. But for the last two weeks they had been given 6 lbs. of rice and 6 lbs. of maize or meal in addition to the usual *dholl* etc.

They went to the Protector of Immigrants' office to complain, but instead of their complaint being heard, they were detained and charged with contravening section 101 of Law 25 of 1891, which forbade employees combining to leave their work in a body. The penalty for the contravention was a fine not exceeding £2 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding two months.

Gandhiji, appearing for the labourers, asked for an eightday adjournment so that a settlement could be arrived at in the meantime. But Mr Hammond of the Railway Department said that he did not feel disposed to withdraw the charge, and Captain Lucas, the Presiding Magistrate, decided that the men having been brought before him for a contravention of the law, he could not go behind the law.

On Gandhiji's replying, a plea of guilty was recorded. In the meantime, an arrangement was come to with the railway authorities whereby the men would in future receive 6 lbs. of rice and 8 lbs. of meal instead of 6. Communicating this to the labourers the Magistrate told them that they had been guilty of a "flagrant breach of law", and he was there to enforce the law. He imposed a fine of 1s each with the option of three days' imprisonment.

They, one and all, refused to pay the fine and "the long procession marched to the gaol". It was, however, explained to them by their friends that the issue on which they had struck work was not section 101 of the Immigration Act (See p. 501) but inadequacy of rations supplied to them. On this score a settlement acceptable to them had been reached. They would not be justified in tacking on to it a fresh issue. If they wanted to fight it out, they would have to take it up separately after giving clear notice to the authorities, when all representations had failed. The labourers consequently paid the fine and returned to their work.

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The march to gaol in a body by a large number of indentured labourers in an orderly procession instead of acquiescing in what they strongly felt to be grave injustice foreshadowed things to come, as also did their decision not to continue their resistance after a settlement had been reached in respect of the specific grievance against which they had launched their protest.

Immediately after the settlement Gandhiji wrote a letter to the General Manager of the Natal Government Railways, and was thanked by that official

for the trouble you have taken to explain the question relating to the issue of Maize meal . . . as well as for the manner in which you have expressed yourself as to the desire on your part to satisfy, and conciliate, the Indian employees of the Department.[8]

4

The more Gandhiji studied the indenture law, the more he studied its working, the more appalled he was at the stark tragedy of the "coolie's" life-in-death existence. The degradation to which he was subjected by the oppressors numbed the spirit and crushed out of the victim all sense of dignity as a human being. From the moment he was recruited to the last day of his indenture — unless merciful death provided release earlier — his was an unrelieved tragedy of dumb suffering under heartless exploitation. The system of recruitment was vicious, the subsequent treatment of the "coolie" a disgrace to humanity.

To obtain a steady supply of indentured labour for the British overseas colonial possessions the Emigration agents of the British Colonies engaged professional recruiters called "touts". But the real recruiting agents were the recurring famines, and the ignorance and the destitution of the Indian masses (See pp. 59-61). "Touts", crafty and unscrupulous, burrowed into villages where the crops had failed, and pilgrim centres, where among illiterate destitute folk congregated in their thousand they found a happy hunting ground for their nefarious traffic. The victims lured by their wiles were brought for so-called legal procedures to the recruiting depots, where the recruiter received a gratuity of Rs. 45/- (£3.00) for every male and Rs. 55/- (£ 3.16.6) for every female he enrolled as an emigrant. The way he took advantage of their ignorance, the violence and the fraud to which he resorted to compass his end, the horrible fate of the victims, and their despair when they discovered too late the utter hopelessness of their situation beggar description. The curious can look for them in authentic records.[9]

The conditions of transport of this human cargo were scandalous. Men, women and children of all ages were huddled together below decks in special quarters partitioned by a steel wire in the "coolie ships".

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The poop-deck was reserved for women. Food supplied during the voyage was poor and inadequate and the supply of drinking water, strictly rationed, altogether insufficient. As a result fevers, beri-beri, scurvy, dysentery and various respiratory diseases exacted a heavy toll. The bodies of those who died during the voyage were thrown into the sea.[10]

Hardly any emigrant had at the time of embarkation a ghost of an idea of the conditions under which he or she would have to live and labour on the plantations. There was no stipulation in the contract as to the nature of work, or, if the immigrant found the conditions intolerable, giving him the freedom to withdraw from the contract. He never knew the employer to whom he would be allotted nor was his consent required to allotment to any employer that the Protector might choose for him. He was not free to withdraw from his contract. Once he was assigned to an employer his doom was sealed. He was completely at his mercy with no hope of release or reprieve.

Indenture is a contract of a peculiar nature entered into, not under the common law of the country, but under a statute especially devised for the purpose. Sir William Hunter described the indenture system as "semi-slavery". What gave validity to this description was the provision under the indenture law which imposed a criminal liability for the most trivial breaches of the contract on the part of the labourers in place of the civil liability which usually attaches to such breaches. Under Section 30 of the Indenture Act of 1891, an Indian Immigrant under indenture, found beyond one mile from the employer's residence without written leave, unless he could prove that he was on his way to lodge a complaint before the Divisional Magistrate or the Protector, was liable to be arrested and sent back to his employer, all charges incurred on this account being deducted from his wages. Anyone who sheltered or gave him food ran the risk of being prosecuted for illegally harbouring and being fined £10, and having to pay at the rate of 8s per day for the whole time the "coolie" had been absent from the employer.[11]

If on enquiry the Magistrate felt that the complaint lodged was "frivolous", a similar deduction could be made, up to the maximum limit of half the monthly wage. Frequently it happened that indentured Indians bearing written leave of absence were arrested by police, who tore up the passes, as there was a reward given for the arrest of "deserters" as in olden days to the captors of "run-away-slaves".

Section 31 empowered the Protector, or any Magistrate or Justice of the Peace, or any Police Constable, or the owner or occupier of any land or house (including his servants) to stop any immigrant found upon or about such house or land and demand his certificate of discharge or his written leave of absence. The presumption, therefore, was that every Indian immigrant, whether free or covenanted, was a deserter. If he failed to produce the document, he was taken forthwith to the nearest

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Magistrate, who, unless he was satisfied that the immigrant had a certificate of discharge or a written leave of absence, imposed a fine of 10s for the first offence — approximately a month's wage — or inflicted the punishment of imprisonment, with hard labour for fourteen days, and for every subsequent offence, 30 days. After the completion of his sentence he was returned to his owner *at his own expense.*

The most amazing of all the sections of this Act was perhaps Section 101. It provided that, if all or a large number of the Indian immigrants employed upon any estate or property absented themselves from their employment without leave "for the purpose or on the pretence of making any complaint" against their employer, they were liable to be brought before any court, and on conviction punished by fine "not exceeding two pounds sterling", three to four times the monthly wages, or by "imprisonment for any period not exceeding two months, with or without hard labour, *whether such complaint shall or shall not be adjudged to be groundless or frivolous, and notwithstanding that such complaint may be successful*".

Describing it as "the most scandalous provision extent on any British Statute Book," the *Natal Advertiser* wrote:

> This means that even if a number of Indians carry a gross complaint against ill-treatment to the Protector and succeed in getting compensation and redress, they are liable to two months' hard labour for having dared to seek justice without first obtaining permission! . . . What if these unfortunate wretches have to ask permission to go to the Protector from the very man they propose to complain against? . . . And, if not, are they to endure on in patience? This section alone is enough to damn the whole Act.[12]

The system reeked of brutality and injustice. Penalties were imposed for "unlawful absence" from work in the shape of deductions for each day's absence, the monthly total not to exceed the monthly wages. In addition, where the number of such absences exceeded 25 days in any year, double the number of days were to be added before the terms of contract was held to have expired. Heavy punishments were inflicted for absence from roll-call, "neglect of work", "disobedience", "gross insolence", deception and damage done to the employer's property.

In case of sickness, the employer could deduct from the wages at the rate of fourpence per day during the first and second years of indenture, and sixpence per day during the remaining period. But not infrequently the employers deducted full sixpence *per diem* whatever the length of service, while some unscrupulous employers, to get rid of the responsibility of caring for sick labourers, and in order to deduct a large amount from the monthly wages, actually had the sick — men as well as women — arrested for "absence without leave", so that the State had to bear the cost and the employer derived the benefit.

As a result the sick, the injured and the ailing arrived at the

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hospital too late for recovery — sometimes only to die. The thing became so scandalous that the Government was at last forced to modify the law and provided that when Indians "triable before a Magistrate were sent to gaol when they ought to be sent to the hospital", the gaoler should have power to send them to the hospital, and the cost charged to the employer. The intention, the Attorney-General explained, was that "the gaol should not be made a hospital for sick Indians, on the pretence that they had committed an offence of a trivial character".[13]

Life on the farm of an indentured "coolie" was a nightmare. He was worked beyond his capacity from dawn to dusk — sometimes from four in the morning till seven in the night. Some employers preferred women because they cost less, could be ill-treated with greater impunity and did quite two-thirds as much work as men. Law 25 of 1891 provided that assignment of women and younger persons should be "only for such work as such females or younger persons are fit for". Cutting cane, or lifting bundles of cane on to trucks or wagons and feeding cane rollers with cane was not for "females". But this provision was honoured more in the breach than the observance. Women, staggering under heavy loads, would arrive at the depot to find the employer or overseer standing by the weighing machine, and if they were a few pounds under-weight, down came the *sjambok* on their unprotected heads and quivering shoulders to the accompaniment of a torrent of abuse by the overseer, who seemed to proceed on the assumption that nothing could be done with them unless they shouted at them.[14]

The most abominable feature of this system was the introduction of women in the proportion of forty to one hundred men. The women were not necessarily wives or relatives of the labourers. This and the conditions under which they had to live resulted in the breakdown of all religious and moral restraints till the very distinction between a married woman and a concubine was obliterated. The procedure adopted was simple. After separating the married couples from the rest, the "overseer" assigned all unaccompanied women to the remaining men — each woman to serve three, four or sometimes five persons whom he named. This was necessary, the "overseer" said, "in the interest of peace", otherwise "there would be pandemonium". Hence, perhaps, the term "coolie maries" for Indian indentured women in South Africa.

Indian religious marriages entered into prior to the completion of the contract (and even afterwards) were in practice not recognised unless registered with the Protector. And even such recognition often provided no protection. The terms of indenture Laws prohibited the separation of husband and wife, or parents and children in the allotment of labourers to employers. But there was no provision for the prevention of separation *after* allotment. Little wonder then that most abominable immorality prevailed and venereal diseases worked havoc amongst the indentured labourers.

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The death rate for infants and children on the "coolie estates" was heavy. In the Umzinto Circle, the Protector observed in the Immigration Report for 1894, this was "no doubt due to the long hours of exposure in the open air while the mothers are (were) at work".[15] On one estate the only intimation that the Indian Medical Officer had of children being ill was "the request from the Manager for death certificates".[16]

Between the master and the employed under this system there could be no relationship that could by any stretch of the imagination be described as human. Some employers, in fact, regarded their Indian labourer as of even less account than a good beast. For it cost money to replace an animal whereas indentured labour was cheaply procured. In January, 1895, a young Indian was brought before Mr Dillon, charged with begging. The Magistrate found that he was totally blind. Questioned, he said that he was indentured to a farmer, and whilst endeavouring to beat out a grassfire, lost his eyesight. His employer, finding that he was of no use, discharged him without compensation. Since then he had to resort to begging.[17]

What added to the desperation of the labourers was the knowledge that in the case of influential employers there was scarcely a chance of obtaining redress. The employer would be let off with a trifling penalty. In May, 1895, an Indian coolie waiter being ordered by F. J. Johnson, Junior, of the Royal Hotel, Durban, to get him a tray from the pantry was delayed some time, not knowing where the tray was. This annoyed his master, who came down upon him, twisted his arm and struck him several times. A handkerchief saturated with blood and a coat almost torn to pieces were produced in the court. The defendant admitted having shaken the complainant's arm but denied the assault as described, and got J. Brown, barman at the Royal, to corroborate his statement. The Magistrate held that the case had been

> magnified to a great extent. In the scuffle complainant had bumped his nose, and in order to ensure his case he had preserved every drop of blood on the turban.

Holding the accused "technically guilty" of assault, he fined him "one penny"![18]

Sometimes the employer even succeeded in getting the complainant convicted of perjury. No wonder the labourers chose to suffer the penalty and went to gaol again and again rather than return to their heartless employers, and sometimes even preferred death to work under indenture. Some Magistrates, who had to administer the Indenture Law, felt disgusted with their job. In June 1895 an indentured immigrant was brought up at the Durban Borough Police Court before Mr Dillon, charged with refusing to return to work. He had been *imprisoned for the last two years for refusing to go to work.* He said he would rather die in gaol than return to his master. In answer to the question

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whether he had laid his complaint before the Protector of Immigrants, he stated that he had complained to the Protector time after time as to the hardships he had to undergo when at work, but nothing had been done. It made the Magistrate exclaim:

> This is one of the things that makes me object to sit in the Criminal Court. Here are men, like this coolie, who say they are ill-treated at their work — and the best proof of it is that they prefer imprisonment to returning to their employers. . . . My hands are tied. I have only to administer the law, and I have to give this man thirty days.[19]

Commenting on this the *Natal Mercury* observed: "The natural inference is that something is wrong somewhere . . . *the matter is one that ought to be investigated.* . . . If a coolie is ill-treated, it may be said, that he can complain to the Magistrate, *but it is not an easy matter for any coolie to prove such cases.* It is a matter altogether for the Protector of Immigrants to enquire into and remedy, if possible."[20]

But the Protector could do little under the law which he was called upon to administer. Before long this law was further modified so that the very designation "Protector" became a misnomer.

The only release from this living hell for these poor wretches was by suicide. The incidence of deaths due to suicide for the year 1894 stood at the staggering figure of 1,080 per million.

5

Such was the system under which the bulk of the Indian immigrant population of Natal had groaned since indentured labour was introduced in the Colony thirty-five years ago. The one thing to which the labourer could still look forward was, after he had served out his indenture, to settle in some independent job that would enable him to earn honest bread in peace and relative comfort and open up for his children the opportunity denied him by cruel fate. Even this solace was now to be taken away from him by the Franchise Amendment Bill that had gone to London for Royal assent and the proposed Immigration Amendment Bill.

The Government of India had, it will be remembered, agreed in January-February 1894, to an arrangement by which an Indian immigrant in Natal would be required to return to India after the completion of the term of indenture unless his contract was renewed (See p. 407). The only safeguard that that authority had obtained was that such a refusal must not be made a criminal offence. This safeguard, however, was rendered nugatory when, following the departure of the Delegation, Lord Elgin suggested to the Secretary of State a "special tax" as "the simplest way of enforcing the return of the time-expired Indians". As this proposal would have involved the exclusion of a class of Her Majesty's

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subjects from Natal, the Secretary of State referred the matter to the Colonial Secretary for his opinion before deciding:

It seems to be contemplated that a special tax may be imposed on emigrants who remain in the Colony contrary to the terms of their undertaking. *When once such a tax has been imposed there might be considerable danger of its extension to free Indians who have come to the Colony at* their own expense, and without conditions for the purpose of trade.[21]

While Lord Ripon considered that such a tax would be "in effect a penalty for enforcing contracts voluntarily made by the coolies in India, and might be justified on that account, it would not follow", he wrote back,

that the allowance of such a measure would preclude disallowance of a law imposing a special tax on free Indian emigrants to Natal. Lord Ripon presumes that the Indian Government, in communicating to the Government of Natal their assent to the proposed modification of the existing terms, will not suggest or intimate any approval of the imposition of such a tax but will leave it to the Colonial Government, to raise the point.[22]

On August 2, 1894, H. H. Fowler, the Secretary of State wrote to Lord Elgin in the proposed sense. This, however, was like locking the stable door after the horse has been stolen. For the Government of India had already accepted the principle of the special tax, and, though no written undertaking had been given, the Government of India officials had told the Natal Delegation enough to enable them to report on their return to South Africa that if Natal imposed such a tax, the Government of India would not object (See p. 408).

On September 17, 1894, Lord Elgin signified to the Governor of Natal his formal approval to the Indian Immigration Bill of 1891 being amended with the main modifications:

(1) The labourer when first recruited would be required by the terms of his contract to return to India immediately on the expiration of the period of his indenture, the Natal Government providing the passage money, unless he was prepared to enter into a fresh indenture on the same conditions.
(2) If he desired to remain in the Colony, he would be required to enter into an indenture for two years on the same terms, and on the conclusion of this and of each new period of indenture would be at liberty to enter on a further period of two years on the same terms. After the first period he would be at liberty to choose his employer. The rate of wages for the second period would be 16 shillings per month for the first and 17 shillings per month in the second year, and that for the third period, 18 shillings for the first and 19 shillings for the second year after which it would be fixed at 20 shillings per month.
(3) A breach of the covenant to return to India at the conclusion of a period of indenture would not be made a criminal offence.

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(4) The Delegation's proposal that the number of women recruited might be reduced from 40 to every 100 men to 30 women to every 100 men, was rejected by the Government of India as already 'the number of females settled in the Colony was only about 45 per cent of that of the males'.[23]

Accordingly the Natal Government framed a Bill to amend the Indian Immigration Law, 1891. It was published in their *Gazette* on April 2, 1895, and three days later was forwarded by the Governor of Natal to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

6

Natal opinion on the Indian question fell into three groups. The planters and other employers of Indian labour were in favour of Indians staying in Natal as labourers but not as traders or as free Indians. They were dissatisfied with the Ministry for stopping the £10,000 annual subsidy to support the importation of Indian indentured labour. They recognised the Imperial aspect of the Indian question, were opposed to legislation on racial lines and favoured giving to the Indians a restricted franchise based on education and property tests. This group was represented by the *Natal Advertiser*.

The working men liked the Indians neither as traders nor as labourers and wished to see them bundled out of the country bag and baggage. As their mouthpiece, the *Natal Witness* demanded the stoppage of Indian Immigration altogether. As long as the Colony was dependent upon Indian immigrant labour, it argued, so long would the Government at Home be in a position to dictate to them the treatment to be given to the Indians who, in their view, could not be denied Imperial citizenship rights.[24]

Midway between the two stood the Ministry. One of its members, Harry Escombe, the Attorney-General, it will be remembered, had, in his pre-office days, some of the wealthiest Indian merchants of Natal, including Dada Abdulla, as his clients. He was known firmly to hold the view that the vested rights of Indians already settled in Natal must in all fairness be recognised and protected. Though in sympathy with the employer class, the Ministry wished, so far as possible, not to antagonise the working men's party, which with its growing numerical strength was fast becoming the dominant political power. Reflecting this ambivalence, the *Natal Mercury* laid down the *ipse dixit*:

> The solution of the native question is the solution of the Indian question. The first is the cause and the second the effect. Get at the root of the first and remove it, and the second will disappear naturally.[25]

It advocated teaching the native "the dignity of labour" and thereby turning a "liability" into an "asset".

The interests of the planter class and the working men's party often

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clashed and on occasions they both, though for different reasons, fell foul of the Ministry. But they were at one so far as the maintenance of the white supremacy and denial of equal political rights to the Indians were concerned. The difference was mainly of degree and as to method.

The *Natal Advertiser* was for closer collaboration between Natal and the sister colony in dealing with the Indian question and Cecil Rhodes, as we have already seen, shared this sentiment (See p. 464). Only by evolving a common policy could they sufficiently pressurise the Home Government to the point of letting them have a free hand in dealing with the Asiatic question. The *Natal Witness* on the other hand publicly advocated that British colonies should join hands with the two Dutch Republics and arrive at a common solution of the vexed Indian question that would apply to the whole of South Africa.

As early as September, 1894, referring to the proposed Indian Immigration Law Amendment Bill, the *Witness* wrote: "If the indentured coolie has long been an offence to the neighbouring States and Colonies, he is certainly not less, but much more of, an offence when he becomes his own master."[26] In June following it again urged that if the Imperial Government, acting through the Indian Government, disallowed further emigration from India, the Natal Ministry should take up the challenge and be prepared to do without the Indian immigrant labour. "If the Imperial Government has strong cards we must look for stronger." And these would be found by

> obtaining actual support from the Legislatures and Governments of the Cape and Transvaal. . . . The Natal Government should at once approach those of the Cape and Transvaal with a view to similar legislation in the coming sessions of their Legislatures.[27]

For reasons adduced in the preceding chapter (See p. 474), a slow change had of late been coming over the tone of the *Natal Advertiser*, the conservative mouthpiece of enlightened Imperialism at Home. As the year 1894 drew to a close it began to show greater awareness of the imperial aspect of the Indian question as against the purely local. Dismayed by the prospect of the stoppage of Indian immigration after the pattern set by the two Republics, which would have spelt the financial ruin of the planter class, it warned the Colonists that they must not forget that in the matter of legislation for the termination of Indian Immigration they were not on a par with the two Republics. While the Dutch could do as they pleased, the Colonies were under Imperial control.

> In belonging to the British Empire we have to take whatever may be evil, as well as whatever may be good, as arising from that connection . . . As regards the destinies of India's population, it may be taken for granted that the Imperial Government will not readily permit of legislation in any British dependency which has for its avowed object the repulsion of India's

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surplus population from any part of the British dominions; . . . If India is to be retained as an advantageous part of the Empire, then it is absolutely necessary that means shall be found for relieving it of much of its present population . . . thus . . . the question of coolie immigration into the British Colonies is one which reaches down to the deepest foundations on which the British Empire stands . . . it may even mean the inclusion or exclusion of that great possession in or from the British Empire. That is the Imperial aspect of the question, and is one which points directly to a desire on the part of the Imperial Government to do all in its power to prevent the upraising in other portions of the Empire of barriers for the prevention of Indian Immigration.

Even in its local aspect, it continued, the clamour for the stoppage of Indian immigration hardly made sense.

There is unquestionably much that is undesirable about the coolie, but before his presence here is condemned as an unmixed evil, it has to be shown that the colony would have been better without him. This, we think, would be somewhat difficult to prove. There can be no question that the coolie is the best fitted under existing local conditions for the field labour required in connection with the agriculture of the Colony. Such work can never be undertaken . . . by white men; our natives show little disposition or aptitude for it. This being so, who is ousted by the presence of the coolie as an agricultural labourer? No one. . . . Again the coolie is largely employed by Government, especially on the railway. What is the objection to him there? It may be said he is taking the place of the white man there; but is he? . . . Further the towns in Natal are almost entirely dependent for their supply of vegetables, fowls, and eggs upon the coolies, who farm plots of ground in the vicinity. With whom does the coolie interfere in this direction? Certainly not with the white man. Our farmers, as a body, have not yet acquired a taste for kitchen gardening sufficient to keep the markets fully supplied. Neither does he interfere with the native who being the incarnation of indolence does not as a rule trouble about the cultivation of anything except mealies for himself.

Not only did the immigrant labourer not compete with the whites to the latter's detriment, but his presence was positively an advantage.

The debt which the white man owes to these coloured labourers is this — that they, by occupying the lowest stratum of society . . . raise the white man one stratum higher right through the social scale than he otherwise would have occupied had the menial offices been discharged by a European class. For instance, the white man who is 'boss' over a gang of coolies would have had himself to form one of the gang of labourers had there been no black labourer at command.[28]

Steering a middle course, the *Natal Mercury* suggested eliminating

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the free Indian as a political factor by disfranchising him and the Immigrant labourer by tackling the problem of the time-expired labourer in a way that would render his stay in the Colony impossible unless under indenture. Disfranchisement of the Asiatic would satisfy the racial prejudice of the working class; the re-indenture of the coolie would satisfy the employer and the propertied class by ensuring a continuous supply of cheap bonded labour and exchange of "new lamps for old" into the bargain! The villain of the piece, the *Mercury* insinuated, was the free Indian. In support it quoted Mr Manisty, the Deputy Protector, who had said:

> Time-expired Indians are a great source of annoyance to the upcountry employer, . . . they wander about the country on some pretext or other, *sowing seeds of discontent among the indentured Indians* and inducing them to desert. *They object to work for the farmer, except on a very high rate of wages.* (*sic*) (Italics mine)

The *Mercury* consolingly added that the Government were in a fair way to solving the problem of these time-expired men with the adoption of a system by which "this great and growing Asiatic population in our midst will be kept within wise and reasonable limits". Much of the opposition to "coolie immigration" would then disappear.[29]

As expected, the Bill was assailed by the working men's party on the ground that it did not go far enough. "A residential tax," wrote the *Natal Witness*,

> will not keep down the increase of the Indian population. . . . An Indian elects to remain in the Colony. He may, or may not, have a family. If the latter, it will not be long before he has one. In either case the labour of his family will in a very short time make the tax an easy one.[30]

Besides, the Ministry had not stated whether the terms of the Bill had had the approval of the Home Government before it was published. "It will be no use . . . passing measures, session after session, which may not be sanctioned." An even stronger objection was that

> the imported Indian gives his labour to the Colony for so many years, but *in what way will the Colony be benefited by his progeny? If we are to make the restriction felt, we must be prepared to carry it beyond one generation, and the tax should apply to every child of an Indian.*[31]

Looking at the Indian problem from all sides therefore it was clear, this organ of the working men party urged, that the Bill to amend the Indian Immigration would "help us but very slightly towards its solution. The Government should take the immigrant trader in hand as well as the immigrant labourer".[32]

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7

On the Indian Immigration Amendment Bill being introduced in the Natal Assembly in the first week of May, Gandhiji addressed a petition to the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislature, which was presented to the Natal Assembly over the signature of Abdulla Haji Adam and others. It characterised the clause about the extension of the term of indenture as being "in direct opposition" to the fundamental principles of the British constitution:

> Forced labour from the grossest form of slavery to the mildest form of *veth* (impressed, unpaid labour), has always been repugnant to the British traditions. . . . It was only a short time ago when it was admitted by Her Majesty's Government . . . that the indentured labour (on the tea estates of Assam) was an evil to be countenanced only as long as it was absolutely necessary to support or promote an important industry, and to be removed at the first suitable opportunity.

If the proposed extension of the term of indenture was thus "unjust, uncalled for and opposed to the fundamental principles of the British Constitution", even more so was the proposed imposition of a special tax on those who had served out their indenture, to force them to return after the best had been taken out of them.

> It has long been acknowledged as an axiomatic truth that taxation is meant only for the purposes of revenue. . . . The proposed taxation is avowedly meant to drive the Indian out of the Colony after he has finished his indenture. It will, therefore, be a prohibitive tax. . . . It will . . . inflict . . . an unwarranted wrong on the indentured Indians, because for an indentured Indian, who has severed all connection with India and come down to the Colony with his family, to go back and hope to earn a livelihood is almost an utter impossibility. . . . As a rule, it is only those Indians who cannot find work to keep body and soul together in India who come to the Colony under indenture. The very fabric of the Indian society is such that the Indian, in the first place, does not leave his home, and when once he is driven to do so, it is hopeless for him to return to India and expect to earn bread, much less to make a fortune. . . . The Bill is a piece of class legislation. . . . The indentured Indians, who so materially help forward the prosperity of the Colony, are entitled to better consideration.[33]

Moving the second reading in the Natal Assembly on May 8, the Attorney-General said: "These Indians were brought here for the purpose of supplying labour for the development of local industries, and *were not intended to form portion of the South African nation* which was being built up in the various States (hear, hear)" (Italics mine). Under the Bill every Indian if he did not re-engage himself and failed to return to India would be subject to a "double penalty". He would forfeit

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the return passage money and would further be liable to pay a "penalty", which the Government had decided should be £3 per annum. The Government of India having categorically stated that they would "altogether object" to the enforcement of any criminal penalty against an Indian because of his refusal to return to India, the Attorney-General explained,

if an Indian refused to return to India, *it would not be possible to put the criminal law in motion by using physical force upon the man and compelling him to go on shipboard;* but he did not understand that restriction to prevent the imposition of a reasonable tax, which simply showed the man that he must adhere to his contract, and if he broke his contract he must contribute towards the general revenue.[34]

After Messrs Hulett, Maydon, and Binns had spoken in support of the Attorney-General, Mr Tatham took the floor. With regard to the penalty to be imposed, he said, it seemed to him it would be "no penalty at all",[35] because how were they going to recover it? Where was there any clause in the Bill for punishment if a man evaded payment of the tax? The Attorney-General, replying, stated that the Government of India had "refused to allow their Indians to come here subject to any penal liability, and therefore none was mentioned". But since every Indian, who had been five years in the Colony and did not want to return, must have £3 worth of property *there was nothing to prevent them from attaching the same by civil process*. Taking advantage of the applause with which his remarks were received, he went on to warn: "They were likely to create difficulties for themselves, if they indicated a wish on the part of the Colony to put men under criminal punishment because of an objection to their settling in the Colony."

The Bill was then read for the second time.

The Natal whites were still not satisfied. Giving expression to their views, the *Natal Advertiser* wrote:

It is doubtful, whether we are any nearer a solution of the difficulty. . . . If a tax sufficiently heavy to drive the coolies away is inserted in the Bill, the measure will probably be vetoed by the Imperial Government; if only a light tax is inserted in order to ensure the acceptance of the Bill, then it also ensures the continued settlement of the coolie in this country.[36]

Divided between two minds, like a man who wants to eat his cake and have it, the Natal whites behaved like neurotics. They knew they could not do without the man they hated most and they hated themselves for not being able to do without him. "The Natalian," wrote the *Capital*,

wants the coolie's services but not his presence. He frets over the problem until he makes himself politically sick. Not only does the coolie aggravate him

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by not leaving the Colony when his term of indenture has expired, but the colonist is additionally upset by the reflection that he does not want him to do so, as he would take his services with him. But still he howls at him because he will not go![37]

Indulging in a little filibuster on behalf of the planter, who could not forgive stopping of the Immigration subsidy by the Ministry, a *Natal Advertiser* columnist rubbed in: "I rather fancy the Home Government will object to a tax *which is class legislation in its most pronounced form* and is plainly *intended to inflict, by a side wind, a punishment which the Indian Government distinctly refused to give assent to.*"[38] Pointing out the manifest unfairness of discriminating specially against a class of people who were fellow subjects of the Empire, after all they had done to build the prosperity of the Colony, the *Natal Advertiser* wrote a few days later:

A broad question . . . is raised by this proposal to establish a special tax on coolie settlers. If such a disability is to be placed on coolies coming from another part of the Empire, surely its application should be extended to include members of other non-European races who have no connection with the British Empire. . . . To specially select the coolie for attention in this way, and to allow all other aliens to settle here with impunity and without disability, is not an equitable arrangement. *The practice of taxing aliens*, if it is to be inaugurated at all, *should surely commence with those races not under the British flag in their native land, and not with those who, whether we like the fact or not, are subjects of the same Sovereign as ourselves.* These should be the last, not the first, to be placed by us under exceptional disabilities.[39]

But the average Natalian had little use for "imperial sentiment", when it clashed with his own immediate self-interest. Reflecting his attitude was a popular doggerel that appeared in the *Natal Mercury:*

We had no squalid coolies then,
With truthless tongues and artful ways;
No Arab storeman's unclean den
Disfigured West Street in those days.
The White man ran the kafir trade,
And *was* the "boss" in days gone by;
But now the Hindoo takes our cash,
"Busts up" and straightway "does a guy".
With a ha ha ha and a ho ho ho,
Ramsammy soon will have to go;
He's been too long ourselves among,
Ikona lo coolie when we were young.[40]

Working itself into a frenzy of self-righteousness the *Natal Mercury* observed:

Leading Indians of Durban who have petitioned the Assembly in regard to the Immigration Bill have curious ideas upon common things. . . . Be-

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cause Natal has raised the Indian . . . from his lowly lot in Hindustan . . . in return therefor he must be allowed, having waxed fat, to kick off the sacred obligations of contract, remain here in direct violation of principles of right and wrong, and, for the blessing we have been to him, begin to be a curse to us. . . . Surely, the thoughts and ways of the mild Hindu are peculiar.[41]

All this was, however, much ado about nothing, if only the Natal white had known. The members of the Viceroy's Executive Council and the Government of India officials were prepared to go farther to oblige him than even the most go-ahead of the white colonists could have wished or dared to ask for. While the Natal Deputation was still in India, Sir Charles Mitchell, Emigration Agent for Natal, had suggested that a refusal to return on the part of a "time-expired coolie", unless he re-engaged under indenture, must be punished as a crime. Thereupon the redoubtable E. C. Buck, with characteristic bureaucratic contempt for bothersome legalities, proposed summary deportation of such a "coolie", which even the Government of India shied from (See p. 407) and the Natal Attorney-General later ruled out (See p. 511). Referring to Sir Charles Mitchell's proposal he remarked:

But is this necessary? If a free passage is offered at the end of eight years and the coolie when recruited agrees to be deported at the end of eight years (unless he re-engaged under indenture) cannot he be made to fulfil this part of his contract by being taken on board a returning vessel, just as during his contract he can be carried back to a plantation from which he has run away (See Natal Ordinance 25 of 1891, Section 31) ?[42]

One of the amendments affected in the Immigration Bill when the Natal Assembly went into committee on May 14, 1895, was to substitute the words "pass" or "licence fee" for "tax". "It should be recognised," cautioned the *Natal Mercury*, "that the Bill has to *be most carefully worded (sic); otherwise the chance of its provisions being agreed to by the Home Government may be endangered.*"[43] To the indentured labourer this made little difference. The change of name did not make the imposition less oppressive. It showed, however, as Gandhiji pointed out, that the framers knew full well that "a special poll-tax, on a special class of people in the Colony" was "entirely repugnant to the British notions of Justice".[44]

On the Attorney-General moving the amendment requiring every Indian at the end of his term of indenture to take out a "pass" or "licence" to remain in the Colony and to pay for such a pass or licence a yearly sum of £3, Mr Bale suggested that "the money should be recovered in a summary way". The Attorney-General agreed. Clause 6 embodying this provision consequently read:

Every indentured Indian who shall . . . refuse to return to India or become reindentured in Natal, shall take out year by year a pass

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or licence to remain in the Colony . . . and shall pay for such pass or licence a yearly sum of £3 sterling *which may be recovered by summary process.*[45]

In the draft Bill that had been introduced in the Parliament the amount of the tax had not been specified. But it was known that the Natal Delegation had originally proposed the imposition of an annual poll-tax of £25 on every Indian who had been freed from indenture. (See p. 402). How this amount was reduced to £3 has been described by Gandhiji in his *My Experiments with Truth.*

We organised a fierce campaign against this tax. If the Natal Indian Congress had remained silent on the subject, the Viceroy (Lord Elgin) might have approved of even the £25 tax. The reduction from £25 to £3 was probably due solely to the Congress agitation.[46]

8

When the Bill was introduced in the Natal Council, on June 25, the Indians presented another petition to that body. The main reasons urged against the Bill were:

(1) Messrs Binns and Mason had put it on record that so far no second term of indenture had been agreed to in the case of any country to which the "coolies" emigrated, although the consent of the Government of India had frequently been asked for; and in no instance had the condition of compulsory return at the end of the indentures been sanctioned. The clauses in the Bill were therefore "a total departure . . . for the worse from the practice prevalent throughout the British Colonies".

(2) Assuming that the average age of an indentured Indian at the time of his arrival in the Colony was 25, under the clause which expected him to work for ten years, the best part of his life "would be simply spent away in a state of bondage". To return to India after continuous ten years' stay would be "pure fatuity. All the old cords will have been broken up". He would be "comparatively a stranger" in the land of his birth. To find work in India would be almost impossible.

(3) The total of the wages for ten years worked out to £87. Even if the indentured Indian out of this amount saved £50, which in most cases was extremely unlikely, this much capital would not bring him interest sufficient to keep body and soul together even in a poor country like India.

(4) As to the clause, about the £3 licence, why one class of Her Majesty's subjects, "and this the most useful to the Colony", should be singled out for such taxation it was difficult to understand. "It is not in accordance with the principles of simple justice and equity, to make a man pay heavily for being allowed to remain free in the Colony after he has already lived under bondage for ten years."

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(5) It had been argued that the clause would apply only to those Indians who would come to the Colony after the Bill had become law, and who would know the terms under which they had come. This, in fact, was grossly unfair to the Indian immigrant;

for both the contracting parties . . . will not have the same freedom of action. An Indian, hard pressed by pangs of poverty and finding it impossible to support his family, can scarcely be called a free agent when he signs the contract of indenture. Men have been known to consent to do far worse things in order to be free from immediately pressing difficulties.[47]

The outcome of the motion, so far as the Council was concerned, was a foregone conclusion. On the following day, June 26, the second reading of the Bill was gone through without any opposition.

The Natal Council having passed the Bill, on August 11 Gandhiji drafted another petition to be submitted to Mr Chamberlain. Quoting extensively from the statements of Messrs Binns and Mason, Mr Saunders, Sir Michael Gallaway, Lord Elgin and others he showed that there was no justification whatever for putting the indentured Indians under special disabilities as a reward for their meritorious services to the Colony. To raise the term of indenture from five years to a practically indefinite period, was "extremely unjust, because uncalled for, so far as the industries protected or affected by the indentured Indians are concerned".

The Protector of Immigrants had in his annual report for 1894 described the Indians generally resident in the Colony as forming a "prosperous, enterprising and law-abiding section of the community". Sir Michael Gallaway, the Chief Justice, had stated that the Indian immigrants had "in a great measure provided . . . for the failure of the White Immigrants" and objected on that score "to any alteration in the terms of the laws under which Indians are introduced into the Colony". The Protector in his Report had further stated:

If it were possible even for a short space of time to withdraw the whole of the Indian population from this Colony, I am convinced that, with but very few exceptions, every industry in existence at the present time would collapse, solely for the want of reliable labour. . . . It is generally admitted throughout the Colony that without the Indian as a labourer, no industry, agricultural or otherwise, of any importance could possibly be carried on successfully.[48]

"Overcrowding" was only a bogey raised to frighten the Imperial Government. There could be no question of "overcrowding" in a newly opened up country "where there are vast tracts of land uncultivated and undeveloped". In the *Annual Report of the Protector of Immigrants for 1894* Messrs Binns and Mason had admitted that the "Coolie" did not come into competition "to any considerable extent with the

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Europeans". The real reason behind the clamour for the expulsion of the free Indians was political. In the Protector's Report, it had been stated:

> There is a strong feeling among the merchants and shopkeepers with regard to the Arabs, who are all traders and not workers; but, as they are mostly British subjects and do not go to the Colony under any form of agreement, it is recognised that they cannot be interfered with.

And again,

> Although we are decidedly of opinion that up to the present the working Indians *who have settled down* . . . have been of great benefit to the Colony, we cannot avoid, having regard to the future, and, in the face of the great Native problem yet to be solved in South Africa, sharing in the concern which is now felt. If a large proportion of the coolies had taken advantage of the return passage provided for them, there would have been less cause for alarm.[49]

This, instead of justifying the restrictive measures proposed, in fact proved the exact opposite. For if the Indian traders "who do not go to the Colony under any form of agreement" could not be interfered with, the petitioners pleaded, "much less the indentured Indians, who are also equally British subjects and who are, so to speak, invited to go to the Colony, . . . and who have, therefore, a special claim on the goodwill and attention of the Colonists".[50]

The *Natal Mercury* had maintained that the imposition of £3 tax was neither "harsh nor inequitable". How could Her Majesty's Government, the Indians asked, accept as being "neither harsh nor inequitable", a clause requiring those who were "admittedly indispensible to the welfare of the Colony" to remain either under perpetual bondage or to "purchase freedom" by paying, as the *Natal Advertiser* put it, an annual tax of £3?

To show further how grossly unjust the adoption of the compulsory return or re-indenture was, the Memorialists quoted the views and opinions expressed before the Natal Immigration Commission of 1885 by some of the present supporters of the Bill that were wholly at variance with the brief which they were now arguing. J. R. Saunders had stated:

> Though the Commission has made no recommendation on the subject of passing a law to force Indians back to India at the expiration of their term of service unless they renew their indentures, I wish to express my strong condemnation of any such idea, and I feel convinced that many who now advocate the plan, when they realise what it means, will reject it as energetically as I do. Stop Indian immigration and face results, but don't try to do what I can show is a great wrong.
>
> What is it but taking the best out of servants (the good as well as the bad), and then refusing them the enjoyment of the reward! Forcing them back (if we could, but we cannot) when their best days have been spent for our benefit. Whereto? Why, back to face a prospect of starvation from

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which they sought to escape when they were young. Shylock-like, taking the pound of flesh, and Shylock-like we may rely on meeting—Shylock's reward.

Stop Indian immigration if you will; if there are not enough unoccupied houses now, empty more by clearing out Arabs and Indians who live in them, and who add to the productive and consuming power of a less than half-peopled country. But let us trace results. . . . Let this result and others, far too numerous to be calculated in detail, be faced, and if blind race sentimentalism or jealousy is to prevail, so be it. The Colony can stop Indian immigration, and that perhaps far more easily and permanently than some 'popularity seekers' would desire. But force men off at the end of their service, this the Colony cannot do. And I urge on it not to discredit a fair name by trying.[51]

Harry Escombe in his evidence before the Commission had said:

With reference to time-expired Indians, I do not think that it ought to be compulsory on any man to go to any part of the world save for a crime for which he is transported; I hear a great deal of this question; I have been asked again and again to take a different view, but I have not been able to do it. A man is brought here, *in theory with his own consent, in practice very often without his consent*, he gives the best five years of his life, he forms new ties, forgets the old ones, perhaps establishes a home here, and he cannot, according to my view of right and wrong, be sent back. Better by far to stop the further introduction of Indians altogether than to take what work you can out of them and order them away. The Colony, or part of the Colony, seems to want Indians but also wishes to avoid the consequences of Indian immigration. The Indian people do not harm as far as I know; in certain respects they do a great deal of good. I have never heard a reason to justify the extradition of a man who has behaved well for five years. I do not think that the Indian, at the expiration of his five years' service, should be placed under police supervision unless he is a criminal. I know not why Arabs should be placed under police supervision more than Europeans. In cases of some Arabs the thing is simply ridiculous. They are men of large means, large connections, who are always used in trade if they can be dealt with more profitably than others.

Mr H. Binns had characterised the idea that all Indians should be compelled to return to India at the end of their term of indenture, as one "most unfair to the Indian population" which would "never be sanctioned by the India Government".

In my opinion the free Indian population is a most useful section of the community. . . . Before there was a free Indian population the towns of Pietermaritzburg and Durban had no supply of fruit, vegetables, and fish. . . . But for the free Indian population, the markets of Pietermaritzburg and Durban would be as badly supplied now as they were ten years ago.[52]

To condemn such persons to perpetual bondage or to make them

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pay a yearly tax of £3 "whether they could afford it or not" was, to say the least, "absolutely one-sided and selfish".

Finally, if the Bill became law the very object of immigration would be defeated. If the object was to enable the Indians to ameliorate their material conditions ultimately, that object would certainly be not fulfilled by compelling them to remain under perpetual indenture. If it was to relieve the overcrowded parts of India, even then it would be defeated as the object of the Bill was not to allow the numbers of the Indians in the Colony to increase but only to replace worn out "coolies", who were no longer fit to bear the burden of indenture by fresh importation and to force them to return to India. That would make the last state worse than the first.

For, while the number of Indians in the overcrowded districts, so far as Natal as an outlet is concerned, will remain the same, those who would return against their will cannot but be a source of additional anxiety and trouble, because they, being without any prospect of work or any capital to maintain them, may have to be maintained at the public expense.

It could be said against this argument that the Indians would gladly pay the annual tax. But such an argument, if advanced, Gandhiji pointed out, would in fact go to prove that the clauses about re-indenture and tax were "absolutely useless" for it had never been contended that the object of the tax was to raise any revenue.

In conclusion the petitioners prayed that if the Colony could not put up with the Indians the only course was to stop all future immigration to Natal

at any rate for the time being. Your Memorialists beg . . . emphatically to protest against an arrangement that gives all the benefit to one party only, and that, indeed, the least in need of it.[53]

Even in the Transvaal—a foreign State—the Government had not ventured to levy an annual tax on the Indians who went there of their own accord and at their own cost. There was only a licence of £3 10s. to be taken out once for all and this too had been the subject of a memorial to Her Majesty's Government. The licence tax in the case of Natal, on the other hand, was "an annual tax in its most obnoxious form levied without any consideration as to the victim's ability to pay and realisable by seizing his property under a summary process". The licence clause being clearly of the nature of a penalty, "went beyond the limits laid down by the Viceroy's despatch of September 17". The Memorialists, therefore, hoped and prayed that Her Majesty's Government would withhold assent to such manifestly arbitrary and unjust clauses.

At the same time the Indians sent a memorial to Lord Elgin, the Viceroy of India. Drawing attention to the penalty clause in the Bill, they urged that if non-compliance with the condition as to compulsory

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return could not set the criminal law in motion, the insertion in the contracts of such a clause was "absolutely useless, if not actually harmful", inasmuch as it might encourage the contracting party to break contract, and the law would connive at such a breach. "And since such extreme precaution presupposes the injustice of the contract, your Memorialists submit that the reasons adduced for inducing the sanction are absolutely insufficient, if any reason could justify it."

Reiterating their protest against any section of Her Majesty's subjects being practically enslaved or subjected to "a special, obnoxious poll-tax" in order that a body of Colonists "who already have been deriving the greatest benefit from such subjects, may be able to satisfy their whims and desire to extract more from the same men without any return whatsoever", they asked that in a matter like that the Indian Government could not let themselves be guided in their decision by "the wish of the Colony". The interests of their subjects overseas should receive prior consideration.

> Five years' indenture . . . is long enough to undergo. To raise it to an indefinite period would mean that an Indian who cannot pay a poll-tax of £3 or return to India, must for ever remain without freedom, without any prospect of ever bettering his condition, without ever even thinking of changing his hut, his meagre allowance and ragged clothes, for a better house, enjoyable food and respectable clothing. He must not even think of educating his children according to his own taste or comforting his wife with any pleasure or recreation. Your Memorialists submit that a life of semi-starvation in India, but of freedom, and among friends and relations in the same state would certainly be better and more desirable than the above. In this case the Indian may expect and get the chance to better his lot, in that, never.[54]

That could never be the object of encouraging immigration.

In the end they prayed that, if the Colony did not want the Indian Immigration without the arrangement objected to being sanctioned, the Viceroy would stop further emigration to Natal.

This prayer fell on deaf ears. Following the introduction of the new Immigration Bill in the Natal Assembly, the Secretary of State for India on May 23, 1895, had sent the draft Bill in question to the Government of India for their opinion. The view taken by them and their officials seemed to be that it on the whole embodied the conditions laid down in the Government of India despatch of September 17, 1894. But Sir Arthur MacKenzie, Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, strongly objected to "making over to an elected Board of employers the functions of the Protector referred to in the Natal Bill", and though one of his officials was of the opinion that they need not object to the proposed change as "both authorities are appointed by Natal", Sir Arthur insisted that "we may write to the Secretary of State agreeing to everything save this".

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No voice was raised against the proposal for the special tax in section 6 of the draft Bill. "We ourselves contemplated this," recorded one of the officials (D.I.) in his noting, "though in accordance with the Secretary of State's wishes we did not suggest it. I do not think that we need object to the principle of the tax."

The same official opined, "I do not think that we need attempt to scrutinise the amount", since "its professed object is to prevent it being worth the while of the coolie to settle as a free settler." A suggestion that "we may say as above to Bengal and Madras . . . and ask them for a very clear expression of opinion" was overruled by Sir Arthur on the ground that "they already accepted the principles".

The despatch of July 30, 1895, of the Government of India to Lord George Hamilton, the Secretary of State for India, was accordingly silent on this grave subject. But it strongly protested against the transference of certain functions and powers, that were hitherto exercised by the Protector of immigrants from that officer to the Immigration Trust Board.

Under the Immigration Trust Law of 1874, the functions of the Trust Board appear to be confined solely to the administration of the funds connected with Indian immigration. To these functions Law 25 of 1891 added the appointment of officers for carrying out the provisions of the immigration Law, and of Medical practitioners of Estates, the power to make and vary certain rules subject to the sanction of the Governor in Council and some other minor functions. The sections of the proposed Bill would thus transfer from the Protector to the Board certain powers and duties the due exercise and fulfilment of which materially affect the welfare of the immigrants.

Further, under Law 20 of 1874 the Board consisted of the Protector of Immigrants, and two other members to be chosen by the Lieutenant Governor, one of whom must be an officer of Government. That law, the Government of India objected, had since been amended by a law of 1880 and by Act Nos. 36 and 37 of 1894 "on neither of which were we consulted, and copies of which have not been furnished to us". A still further amendment was now proposed by which, if it was passed, the members of the Board would be elected by and from the employers of Immigrant labour.

> We object most strongly to the delegation to a Board so constituted of functions such as are referred to in the preceding paragraph and we therefore regret that we are unable to approve of those sections of the draft Bill which concern the authority and functions of the Protector of Immigrants.[55]

This was like straining at a gnat after swallowing a camel. The protest was ignored.

The London *Star* denounced the new Indian Immigration Amendment Bill, "which virtually proposes to reduce Indians to a state of slavery", as still another example of "the hateful persecution to which

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British Indian subjects are being subjected. . . . The thing is a monstrous wrong, an insult to British subjects, a disgrace to its authors, and a slight upon ourselves".[56] *The Times* supporting the Indian prayer, suggested that the Government of India should "suspend indentured immigration to South Africa as it has suspended such immigration to foreign possessions until it obtains the necessary guarantees for the present well-being and the future status of the immigrants". While calling for "sensible and conciliatory action on both sides", it felt constrained to add:

. . . But the Indian Government may be forced to adopt measures in connection with the wider claim now being urged by every section of the Indian community and which has been explicitly acknowledged by Her Majesty's Government at home, namely, the claim of the Indian races to trade and to labour with the full status of British subjects throughout the British Empire and in allied States.[57]

With the Government of India as then constituted this was vain expectation. On November 14, 1895, the Secretary of State wrote to Lord Elgin giving him time to reconsider the position in the light of Indian petitions from Natal submitted in protest against the Indian Immigration Law Amendment Bill. In the meantime the Viceroy was informed, that the Bill that had come for Royal Assent, was being held in abeyance. Lord Elgin's reply dated January 22, 1896, left no room for further deliberation. The Government of India adhered to its view already expressed:

The principle of imposing a tax on Indian immigrants who may wish to settle in Natal was accepted by us after full consideration of all the circumstances, and we have no desire to re-consider our decision in the matter. It appears to us that *the question whether it is right to compel any class of Her Majesty's subjects to pay for permission to reside in any part of Her Majesty's dominions is rather for the consideration of Her Majesty's Government than for ours.* (Italics mine)

The despatch continued:

It is true that the quasi compulsory return to their homes of time expired emigrants lessens the permanent relief afforded by emigration to the overcrowded tracts in India. But, on the other hand, when such emigrants settle down in the Colonies the money saved by them is retained in the Colony instead of being sent or brought back to India; the increase in the number of Indians born in the colony tends to decrease the demand for imported labour and, therefore, the relief afforded to congestion in this country; while the coolie who returns to India is generally well-to-do, and throws no future burden upon his native country and his place in the Colony is taken by those who are a burden.

The Viceroy's despatch concluded:

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We understand, moreover, that the only alternative to the proposed imposition of an annual tax on Indian immigrant settlers is the complete cessation of emigration from India to Natal, which would, we think, be still more injurious to the interests of this country.[58]

This in spite of the steadily growing demand for more and more Indian labour all over the Colony of which the Government were well aware and the fear openly expressed in the Colony that the stoppage of Indian labour by the Indian Government would spell the ruin of Natal's economy!

On August 18, 1896, the new Indian Immigration Amendment Act was promulgated after it had received the Royal Assent and became law.

9

In moving the second reading of the Indian Immigration Trust Board Extended Power Bill in the Natal Council, the Attorney-General had said that

It was in the interest of all parties that the Protector should be altogether unconnected with the Board, (which was to have) extended power. . . . The duty of the Protector was colonial and not sectional, to the country and not to the Board, to the Government of India and not to the Trust Board. Any responsibility that he had was a responsibility that good faith was kept by this Colony with the Indian Government as regards all subjects of the Indian Government allowed to come to this country.[59]

But no safeguard however carefully devised can humanise a system that is in itself inhuman. The very nature of the Indenture Law and the various provisions thereunder were such as to defeat the best efforts of even the most benevolent of Protectors to discharge his responsibility conscientiously. The Attorney-General's brave declaration remained in his mouth only.

If the duty of the Protector was to the Government of India, and his responsibility was to see "that good faith was kept with the Indian Government as regards all subjects of the Indian Government allowed to come to this country", as stated by the Attorney-General, an Indian national or a nominee of the Government of India should have been chosen for that office. To do justice to his designation he should have been familiar with the language or the languages that his proteges spoke or understood. But Mr Mason the Protector—an amiable gentleman personally—was on the contrary a South African white. Appointed by the Natal Government, and altogether unfamiliar with Hindustani, Tamil or any other of the Indian languages spoken by his proteges, he was a member to boot of a Commission that had been sent to India to induce the Government to consent to harsher laws being passed against

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the indentured labourers! A Surgeon Superintendent of Immigrants had once suggested that "the Protector should be easily approachable to the meanest coolie, but he should be unapproachable to the lordliest employer". But when the Protector went to the estates to see for himself how the men were faring or to hear complaints, he often was the guest of the employers. This, as Gandhiji remarked, was like "the judge being the guest of a criminal who is being tried before him".[60]

Of the Divisional Magistrate the less said the better. The Protector, comparatively speaking, was independent of the employer; but the Magistrate, born and bred as he was in an atmosphere of semi-slavery, was thoroughly infected with colonial prejudice. As likely as not he might be himself an employer of contract labour, even a friend of the particular employer against whom complaint was made and who might be a powerful man in his locality, able to bring social pressure to bear.

Arbitrary and careless beyond belief in handling the law that he was called upon to administer, he often came into clash with the Protector, whose powers were so inadequate and ill-defined as to make his position *vis-a-vis* the Magistrate extremely anomalous.

To illustrate: There was an Acting Magistrate of Umzinto, D'Hotman by name. With an unbounded faith, which had almost developed into a mystique, in the efficacy of the lash as an "instrument of moral reform" especially, "when applied to the brown skin",[61] he was known to have awarded ten lashes, in addition to a month's imprisonment to a "native" for stealing an old shirt from another "native"; to another for stealing an old pair of boots; and to still another for stealing a cake of soap from his employer. Shocked by the savagery of the sentences, even the *Natal Mercury* was constrained to ask whether if "in the cases mentioned the culprit had been a white man or boy", the Magistrate would have ordered the whipping. The overzealous official was further told that he must not forget that "his exercise of magisterial functions is watched by the public".[62]

On September 7, 1896, an Indian Thangavellu was charged by A. Pontre, a baker of Smith Street, Durban, before this Magistrate with desertion. He had laid a complaint against his master at the Protector's office. The complaint was sent by the Protector to the Clerk of the Peace for action. After recording the complaint the man was directed to return to his master's estate. He refused. He said he was afraid that if he went back a charge of theft would be framed up against him. The Protector after hearing his story directed that a pass be issued to him pending the hearing of the case. The pass was issued by the Protector's clerk and was subsequently extended for three days.

The Clerk of the Peace, as often happened, took no action for days. The employer in the meantime had the man arrested for being absent without leave.

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Produced before Mr D'Hotman, the accused admitted the desertion but said that he had been assaulted by his master and was therefore afraid of remaining in his service. The Magistrate found the employer guilty of assault only "technically" and fined him 5 shillings. The complaint of the employer against the Indian was then taken up.

The Protector attended the court and gave evidence in favour of the Indian, stating in writing that he had had a pass issued to the Indian which protected him from arrest. The accused was, therefore, warranted in absenting himself from the master's employ pending the hearing of his complaint and the police has no right to arrest him in the Immigration compound.

The Magistrate decided that the Protector had no authority to issue passes and the pass that he had directed to be issued in no way covered prisoner's absence. He found the prisoner guilty, but in consideration of all the circumstances discharged him with a simple warning. The prisoner was ordered to return to his master and resume his duties.

Finding himself in a quandary the Protector appealed to the Supreme Court against the Acting Magistrate's decision. Commenting on the anomaly of his position the *Natal Witness* wrote:

> If he refuses to listen to the complaints of the Indians, he is soundly rated in all quarters for his inhumanity, and if he takes up the cause of the coolies he renders himself liable to strong censure from the Bench for overstepping his duty.[63]

The Chief Justice held that the conviction should be quashed as the charge was made under the wrong section. His colleague, Sir Walter Wragg, characterised the Protector's "high and mighty" action as calculated "to paralyse the courts of justice" and said that he was not empowered by law to give a pass to an Indian and his action was therefore "illegal". Mr Justice Turnbull concurred.

The conviction against Thangavellu was accordingly quashed. But he and a fellow servant, who had given evidence against the master, were returned to the employer. To save them from the master's vendetta, the Protector informed the employer that under section 94 of Law 25, 1891, he had with the Governor's consent cancelled the indentures that bound the two Indians to him and that they should be handed over to his messenger to be transferred to some other employer. The man who had been assaulted accordingly left. The other man had already fled. He was arrested and sentenced to a week's imprisonment for desertion.

By invoking the Governor's prerogative the Protector in this case was able to protect one of his two wards. But even this could not be done in every case. Instances of misapplication of the Indenture Law multiplied till even the Supreme Court was shocked.

In the second week of November 1896, Guppi Gownden, Narran Sammy and a number of other Indians, employed on E. W. Hawks-

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worth's Beneva Estate, were brought before Mr McLaurin, the Umzinto Magistrate, on a charge of contravening Section 101 of Law 25 of 1891 by leaving their estate in a body and proceeding to Umzinto, where they were arrested on October 4. Answering the charge they stated that they had gone to Umzinto to perform the funeral rites at the grave of a fellow servant. The Magistrate recorded a plea of guilty and sentenced the first two to two months' rigorous imprisonment and the rest to a fine of 10s each.

In his "reasons" for judgment he stated that the defendants were brought before him charged with "leaving the estate in a body for the purpose of appearing with complaints". On the previous day there had been insubordination amongst the Indians on the estate, and two men were arrested on a charge of assault upon the Sirdar. "There was no doubt that this large body of men left the estate for the purpose of appearing at the Magistrate's office, though they might now seek to show that they had some other object in view."[64]

The Indians appealed to the Supreme Court for a reversal of the judgment on the following grounds:

(a) that the charge was defective, if it was intended to allege any offence under Section 101. The 4th October being a Sunday, when Indian Immigrants were not required to engage in labour on the estate, they could not "absent" themselves on such a day from employment; (b) that the evidence did not show and the charge did not complain that the accused were absent for the purpose, or on the pretence, of making a complaint against their employer which was the essence of an offence under section 101; (c) that the Magistrate should have recorded the fact that their visit to Umzinto was to perform funeral rites at the grave of a fellow servant; (d) and that the plea of guilty was a simple admission of absence from the estate, which should have been dealt with under section 31.[65]

Mr Pitcher, counsel for the employer, advanced the plea that the Magistrate "had gone on some knowledge of his own which did not appear on the record" and had "wrongly entered the charge which should have been under the 31st section". Amazed, Sir Walter Wragg exclaimed:

"Shocking! Did you ever see such an entry?"

Chief Justice: "Mr Hawksworth gave no evidence in support of the charge."

Mr Pitcher: "There was a plea of guilty."

The Chief Justice: For something which was an offence.

Mr Morcom: They were stated to be absent without leave, and Mr Hawksworth complained in respect of that.

Sir Walter Wragg: It is no offence to leave the estate in a body. You might as well charge them with going up in a balloon.

The Chief Justice: The most extraordinary thing is that so many Indians should plead guilty.

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Sir Walter Wragg : The Magistrate has not only taken the wrong section, but has quoted that section wrongly and created the offence.

Mr Justice Mason : He has not even recorded that they consented to summary trial.

Sir Walter Wragg : It is a terrible thing that these men should have been imprisoned for a fortnight. The fault of the Magistrates was that in dealing with cases they would not look at their law books.[66]

10

There is a point beyond which the lash of the law loses its terror. Despite the increasing stringency of the penalties, cases of "desertion" kept mounting up and the savagery to cope with them made even the Europeans feel sick.

In September of 1896, the residents of Smith Street, Durban, were shocked by the sight of "a miserable looking coolie striving might and main" to free himself from the clutches of two powerfully built "native" constables. He was forcibly being taken back to "Charlie's Kotidi", where he feared to go. A European passer-by, who saw this, characterised in the columns of the *Natal Advertiser* the manner in which the poor man was being handled by "these cruel savages", as "shameful in the extreme in this our enlightened nineteenth century". The "coolie"

howled and cried and struggled and remonstrated with his custodians to let him go. . . . (He) would jump and struggle and make vain attempts to set himself at liberty and then drop down from exhaustion. The limbs of the law, on their part, would hold him upright and push him along—as for giving him any sort of rest it seemed entirely out of the programme . . . 'It does seem strange', that coolies have a dread to return to that particular estate—'Charlie's Kotidi'. . . . They certainly dread something there, and until this something is removed, it seems that there will be no end to desertions. . . .[67]

The labourer, it would seem, had come to lodge a complaint. He did not obtain the relief he had sought for, but on the contrary, while his complaint was being investigated, he was forcibly being escorted back to the very place he dreaded. "And in case the man himself committed suicide," the correspondent asked, "on whose shoulders will the blame rest?"

Another ghastly tragedy shocked Durban in the following month. A number of Indian labourers employed on the sugar estate of Messrs Reynolds & Co., Umzinto, came to lodge a complaint of cruel treatment against their employers and overseers. The Protector, after hearing their complaints, referred them to the Crown Prosecutor. Being summoned to appear at Umzinto they refused to answer to the summonses, as they were afraid that if they went to Umzinto they would be returned to their estate, which they dreaded. On October 7, police constables accompanied by Mr Denning, the Protector's chief clerk, armed with

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warrants of arrest came to take them before the Umzinto court. As soon as they entered the compound of the Protector's office in Aliwal Street where they had been all mustered and told to prepare their bundles for conveyance down to the coast,

> eight men of the party snatched off their loin clothes, which they managed to fasten round their necks and attach to the branch of a tree in the compound before the police could stop them. The branch of the tree was too low to suspend the coolies, but as they strained and tried to strangle themselves they presented a horrible spectacle with their eyes starting from their sockets and their tongues lolling out of their mouths. The women belonging to the party gathered round howling and weeping.[68]

The Protector's chief clerk, however, rushed to the spot before any fatality occurred and with the help of other men cut away the nooses that they had put round their necks to strangulate themselves. The constables then proceeded to handcuff and take them off by force. The Indians threw themselves on the ground, and "struggled and cried so determinedly that it was some time before they could be handcuffed". In the meantime a crowd had gathered at the Protector's compound,

> some cursing and some commiserating the Indians. When at last these two men were handcuffed together, four native constables caught hold of them to carry them to the railway station, one Indian dragged one way and the other another, while one of the bystanders called out 'You will pull his wrist off.' The Indians continued to struggle after they were carried out of the compound and the constable finding them too heavy to carry dropped them on the road which made them howl louder than ever, as their backs, which were bare, came in contact with the sharp stones on the road.[69]

As they were being "half dragged, half carried" past the police station Superintendent Alexander, witnessing the scene, ordered the police officers to stop the "brutal treatment". They were subsequently removed in rickshaws to the railway station to be sent by train to Umzinto.

Things had to worsen before they could be bettered. The Government of India had refused to sanction a £25 residential tax on ex-indentured Indian immigrants who settled in Natal. But the Natal Government circumvented it by extending the tax from the labourers to their wives and children so that a family of eight would have to pay £24 every year. And this became the beginning of the end. The indentured labourer had now found tongue. His cry could no longer be strangled or stifled. As more and more cases of cruelty came to light, the public conscience both in India and England was deeply stirred and even the South African whites felt increasingly troubled. After nineteen years of strenuous struggle the iniquitous £3 tax was repealed. It needed another six years of agitation simultaneously in India and England for the indenture system itself to follow suit.

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11

Engrossed as Gandhiji was in this struggle, he kept in touch with his people in the Boer Republic, the Cape, Zululand and elsewhere. Whenever the need arose, his services were equally at their disposal.

Ever since the South African Republic had passed Law 3 of 1885, the fate of nearly 5,000 Indians settled as traders, shopkeepers, hawkers, cooks, waiters and labourers in the Republic, had hung precariously in the balance. The bulk of them were in Johannesburg and Pretoria. Of these the traders numbered 200.

Three Indian firms imported goods directly from England, Durban, Port Elizabeth, India and other places. Their branches in other parts of the world depended on their Transvaal business. Petty vendors had stores in different places. About 2,000 hawkers bought goods from the wholesalers and hawked them about. Men employed as general servants in European houses and hostels numbered 1,500. Of these, 1,000 were concentrated in Johannesburg.

The British and the Transvaal Governments, it will be remembered, had interpreted differently Law 3 of 1885, as amended in 1886. Indians in the Republic were debarred from acquiring citizenship rights or holding any property or residing "except in such streets, wards and localities as might be assigned to them for sanitary purpose". The crux of the difference rested on the meaning of the word "natives". In Dutch *inborlingen*, used in Article 26 of the Pretoria Convention, stood for "Coloured aboriginals of the Transvaal". *Ter bewoning* signified "residence" to the Dutch and not merely "dealing" (See p. 393).

The British Government contended that although Law 3 contravened Article 14 of the London Convention, they had not insisted upon that fact. They had accepted the amended law as a "sanitary measure". It, therefore, did not apply to persons whose relegation to certain districts was not necessary on sanitary grounds. The dwellings and business premises of British Indian subjects of a superior mode of life should therefore, they contended, be exempted from the operation of that law.

The South African Republic, on the other hand, applied the law to all "aboriginal races of Asia", including thereunder the "so-called coolies, Arabs, Malays, Chinese and Mahomedan subjects of the Turkish Empire. The phrase "residence", they maintained, included business premises as well as private dwelling places. They had, therefore, the right to point out locations, wards and streets where all the Indians must reside and carry on business also.

Sir Hercules Robinson took the same view as the Transvaal Executive, but his successor Sir Henry Loch ignoring Sir Hercules Robinson and the Derby Despatch (See p. 392), tried to bring back the question to the original starting point, which was the ambiguous phrase

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in Article 26 of the Pretoria Convention. The judgment handed down by the Transvaal High Court in the Ismael Suleiman and Co. case in 1888 had led to protracted correspondence between the two Governments. But no agreement could be reached. Through these years the Indian traders, for reasons already stated (See p. 394), had remained more or less masters of the situation. On September 4, 1893, the Transvaal Volksraad passed a resolution to the effect that Law No. 3 of 1885 as amended in 1886 should be "strictly applied in such manner that all Asiatics and persons falling under the law should have to confine themselves, *in respect both of habitation and trade*, to locations assigned to them" (Italics mine). Those who had entered into a lease before the locations had been assigned were excepted until expiry of the lease. In December following this resolution was distributed in circular form among the various *landdrosts*.

Their very existence menaced, the Indian traders appealed to the British Government, who refused to assent to the interpretation of the law embodied in the Volksraad resolution. Ultimately they decided to refer the question of the validity of Law 3 of 1885, and its amendments as also interpretation to the arbitration of Melius De Villiers, Chief Justice of the Orange Free State High Court.

The general feeling in South Africa ran against the Indians being admitted to equal rights with Europeans and the personal feeling of the Chief Justice was also known to run in the same direction. He had made no secret of it. The British Indian subjects, whose interests were at stake, and who strangely had not even been consulted, protested both against the principle of arbitration and the choice of Arbitrator at first verbally to the British Agent at Pretoria and then in writing to the High Commissioner at Cape Town. Their protest was ignored.

The ambivalence of the British attitude on the Indian question provoked much comment in the press. "My own impression is," wrote a *Natal Advertiser* columnist on March 3, 1895,

> that the Imperial Government will not be particularly sorry if the decision goes in favour of the view taken by the Transvaal Government. It is the Indian Government, not the Colonial Office, that has interested itself in the matter; and it may suit the Colonial Office well enough to be able to say that it has done its best by submitting the question to arbitration and that there is an end of it.[70]

On April 2, 1895, the Arbitrator made his award disallowing both the claims.[71] It rejected the contention put forward by Sir Henry Loch in his letter of March 3, 1890, that Her Majesty's Government were entitled to define the interpretations of the law; but it objected equally to a similar claim embodied in the resolution of the Volksraad of September 8, 1893, that was distributed as a circular among the *landdrosts* in December, 1893.

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The South African Republic had the right, the Arbitrator held, to put Law of 1885 into force because, among other reasons, it was agreed to as amended by the British Government "without reserve, condition or qualification". The time to have objected to it was when it was submitted for assent. But once this assent was given the British Government was bound by "the indisputable principle that the legislative enactments of a country are subject to the exclusive interpretation of the tribunals of that country". At the same time the Transvaal Government was equally bound to submit to the law as it stood, and had neither the right nor power to interpret or modify it in any way.

Volksraad Resolutions subsequent to that of 1886 were thus by implication disallowed. In terms of the award it was open to the British Government, the Arbitrator held, to object to the resolution of 1893, as it had not received its assent, or to any similar modification by the tribunals of the South African Republic, but to the law as interpreted by the tribunals of the South African Republic it must submit. Neither Government had the right to interpret Law No. 3. This prerogative belonged exclusively to the High Court of the Transvaal. It was for the High Court of the Republic to decide whether the proceedings of the Transvaal Government had or had not been in conformity with the amended law[72].

In terms of the international law this was considered to be an unassailable position. But even if the Award was legally and technically sustainable—which Gandhiji questioned, it was so flagrantly iniquitous, he argued, as to call for the active intervention of Her Majesty's Government to get the question settled on the diplomatic level. If the British Government had the will, justice could still be secured for the Indian subjects.

It was a very big "if", if the *Natal Advertiser*'s surmise was correct. It was "more than probable," the paper wrote on April 11 after the publication of the Award,

> that the Home Government is not sorry for this decision. *It relieves them of all responsibility*, and *they can now say to the Indian Government that they had done their best in the matter, and that things in South Africa will have to take their course.*[73]

But it was the morning of Gandhiji's faith in the British professions of good faith. Undeterred by the prognostications of the prophets of evil, as soon as the Arbitrator's Award was announced, he submitted a memorial to Sir Jacobus De Wett, the British Agent at Pretoria, on behalf of the Transvaal Indians. Challenging the validity of the Award on the ground that the Arbitrator had not decided the issue submitted to him in terms of the Deed of Submission, he requested the Agent to communicate with London and ascertain whether in view of the

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objections set forth in the Memorial Her Majesty's Government would "be satisfied with the . . . Award and acquiesce therein"?[74]

He followed it up with a petition to the Home Government. This petition, which comprehended the most glaring disabilities of the Indians, in addition to the Law 3, was submitted some time after May 14 and forwarded by Sir Jacobus to High Commissioner at Cape Town on May 30, 1895. It objected to the Award on the following grounds:

(1) The Chief Justice of the Orange Free State with his known anti-Indian bias could not, even with his best efforts to do otherwise, bring to bear upon the question an "equi-balanced judgment", which is so necessary to a right and proper perception of the facts of a case. "Judges having a previous knowledge of cases have been known to refrain from deciding them, lest they should unconsciously be led away by preconceived notions or prejudices."[75]

(2) The award was invalid, first, because the Arbitrator had delegated his function, "which no arbitrator in the world can do". Secondly, the Arbitrator had failed to keep to the reference, inasmuch as he had left undecided the question that he was expressly called upon to decide.[76] The reference required the Arbitrator *either* to allow the claims of one of the two Governments *or* to lay down such interpretation of the ordinances as might appear to *him* to be correct, regard being had to the Despatches on the question. But, instead of interpreting, the learned Arbitrator had delegated the interpretation, and in delegating had "moreover limited the delegation to such persons, as by the very nature of their position, cannot possibly avail themselves of the procedure and evidence that could be availed of, nay that was expressly stipulated to be availed of by the Arbitrator, and that would tend to enable them to lay down such an interpretation as would be just and equitable, though, perhaps, not strictly legal". The Award, not being in terms of the deed of submission, was thus void and could not be binding on Her Majesty's Government.

(3) The Award frustrated the very object with which Arbitration was decided upon. The object of arbitration was not to have the question of interpretation decided in a law court, but to terminate the question once for all. The question that was to be and could only be decided diplomatically and politically was thus left to be decided judicially by a body that was already committed to a decision adverse to the Indian claim. So far as the traders were concerned, if the contention of the Transvaal Government was ultimately upheld, it would mean absolute ruin to them. A question affecting thousands of Her Majesty's subjects, a technical solution of which might bring ruin to hundreds of homes and leave them penniless, could not be left to be decided merely in a court of law, "where everybody's hands are tied down, and where such considerations find no place".

(4) Her Majesty's Government had made it clear in their

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correspondence with the Government of the South African Republic that they had insisted on the fact that Law 3 was a contravention of London Convention and had accepted that law as amended only on the ground that it was "necessary for the protection of the public health". These reasons, he maintained, did not exist. There was, therefore, no moral or legal justification for acquiescence in a departure from clause 14 of London Convention.

To provide a conclusive refutation of the argument that the mode of life of the Indians was insanitary and their presence in the midst of the European community was objected to by all Burghers and Europeans on that and other grounds, Gandhiji had as early as May 5, written to Mahomed Kasim Camroodeen to obtain, besides Indian and European signatures, as many signatures as possible of the Dutch in support of the Indian petition, a translation of which in Afrikaans he had had specially prepared.[77] Two days later Camroodeen reported failure to obtain a single Dutch signature.[78] But Gandhiji persisted, and by the time the Memorial was to be submitted the Dutch petition had been signed by 484 Burghers and the European by 1,340 Europeans. European physicians of repute testified in writing that the dwellings of the better class Indians were "in no way inferior to those of the Europeans from a sanitary viewpoint". One of them Dr. H. Prior Veal, certified that he had "generally" found them (Indians) clean in their person, and free from personal diseases due to dirt or filthy habits. "Class considered, . . . the lowest class Indian lives better and in better habitation and with more regard to sanitary measures, than the lowest class White." Furthermore, "during the period that smallpox was epidemic in the town and district, . . . although every nation nearly had one or more of its members at some time in the *lazaretto*, there was not a single Indian attacked". Two other doctors from Johannesburg attested that Indians were "in no way inferior to the Europeans of the same standing".

An unsolicited testimonial was provided by a letter written on October 16, 1885, by Mr Michell, Joint General Manager of the Standard Bank, to Sir Hercules Robinson, the then High Commissioner, to the effect that the Indian traders were within his knowledge, "in all respects orderly, industrious and respectable people". About 35 European Johannesburg firms of repute declared that the Indian merchants kept their business places as well as their residences in a clean and proper sanitary state, "in fact just as good as the Europeans". They also protested that it was "a distinct error in calling them 'coolies', or inhabitants of British India of a 'lower caste'."

A petition signed by a number of Burghers stated that far from the Burghers being opposed to Indians stopping and trading in the State, they recognised in them a peaceful and law-abiding, and therefore, "desirable" class of people.

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To the poor they are a veritable blessing. . . . We venture to submit that their withdrawal from the State will be a dire calamity to us, especially those of us who, living far away from centres of business, depend upon the Indians for the supply of our daily wants, . . . any measures restrictive of their freedom, and having for their object their ultimate removal, and especially that of . . . traders and hawkers, will necessarily interfere with our enjoyment and comforts.[79]

They, therefore, prayed that the Government would not take any steps that might scare away the Indians from the Transvaal.

Still another petition signed by the European residents of the Republic stated it as their firm belief that the agitation against the Indians owed its origin "not to their habits as regards sanitation, but to trade jealousy . . . . We do not believe any good cause exists for compelling them to reside or trade in separate quarters."

(5) Even if it was assumed for the sake of argument that the Award was proper and final, it provided no justification for putting, in the name of sanitation, British Indian subjects in gullies where sanitation was impossible and which were so far away from town as to render it absolutely impossible for the Indians to trade or live decently. This had actually happened in 1893 in the case of the Malays, who were forced into what the then British Agent had described as a "small location on a spot used as a place to deposit the refuse of the town, without any water except the polluted soakage in the gully between the location and the town", and which, he had warned, "must result in malignant fevers, and other diseases breaking out amongst them, whereby, their lives and the health of the community in town will be endangered". There was therefore a very strong case for the active intervention of Her Majesty's Government, "as if the Award had never been given".

(6) In his Despatch of March 21, 1894, the High Commissioner had said that "Her Majesty's Government assumed that the Arbitration was to apply to "the Aboriginals of Asia who may be British subjects". Were there any "Asiatic Aboriginals" at all in the Transvaal? the petitioners asked. Or, were all Asiatics to be treated as such *ipso facto*? This alone was enough to condemn not only the Award but the whole Arbitration.

(7) "Sanitary" reasons on which the Award rested camouflaged the real reason—racial prejudice, which manifested itself in such disabilities being laid on Indians as denial of the right to own fixed property, to travel first or second class on railways, payment of registration fee of £ 3, and Pass Laws. In the neighbouring territory of Delagoa Bay Indians were so respected that they could not take out a third class railway ticket, nor were they required to have passes. Did their sanitary habits become filthy then as soon

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as they entered the Transvaal? The petitioners hoped that they would not be allowed to fall a prey to the racial prejudice of the whites.

(8) The question of the status of the Indians in the Transvaal was not merely a local question. What the Transvaal Republic did was also bound to have important repercussions in all the neighbouring states.

When the feeling runs so high in South Africa against the Indians, when such a feeling owes its origin to interested agitation . . . when it is known that the feeling is by no means shared by all the Europeans, when there is a general scramble for wealth in South Africa, . . . when there are gross misrepresentations about the habits of the Indians which have given rise to special legislation, it is not too much . . . to request your Excellency to receive with the utmost caution, the statements received against your Petitioners, and the proffered solutions of the Indian question.

The proclamation of 1858 entitled Her Majesty's Indian subjects to be treated "on a footing of equality with all Her Majesty's other subjects". Theirs should therefore be treated, as indeed it was, as "pre-eminently" an Imperial question. With those who had settled in South Africa, it was a question almost of life and death.

By persistent ill-treatment they cannot but degenerate, so much so, that from their civilised habits they would be degraded to the habits of the aboriginal Natives. . . . The very object of Immigration will be frustrated. . . . All Indian enterprise will be stifled.

The suzerain power could not with equanimity contemplate the possibility of such a sad event happening under the Union Jack.

The petition concluded with a challenge and an appeal. If, as had been shown, the sanitary habits of the British Indian subjects of the Transvaal were not such as to endanger the health of the European community, and if it was true that the feeling against them was due to trade jealousy, confined to a particular section of the whites who were exploiting it for their own selfish ends, the award of the Chief Justice of the Orange Free State had no basis and could not be binding on Her Majesty's Government. But if the Colonial Secretary was disposed to doubt that statement it was but fair that "some impartial enquiry should be made as to the truth of the conflicting statements and that the whole question of the *status* of the Indian in South Africa should be sifted".[80]

Supporting the Indian petition the London *Times* indignantly asked :

Are Her Majesty's Indian subjects to be treated as a degraded and an outcast race by a friendly Government or are they to have the same rights and status as other British subjects enjoy? Are leading Mahomedan merchants who might sit in the Legislative Council at Bombay to be liable to indignities and outrage in the South African Republic?[81]

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The truth about the outcry that had been raised against the Indians in the Transvaal had been stated with a rare candour by that prince of South African journalists, St. Leger, in a leading article in the *Cape Times* of April 13, 1889, before the canker of racial prejudice had gone too deep down in the Cape.

It sometimes happens in life that men are called upon to decide decisively between the claims of justice and claims of self. With men of honourable inclination the task is . . . a far heavier one than with men whose natures have long ago cast overboard any conscientious scruples with which they may have been endowed at the outset of their unlovely existence. From men who will puff rotten companies at the very moment they are selling out, and individuals of a like character, it is, of course, perfectly absurd to expect any other result than that self will predominate, but with the average commercial man justice is more often the victor in the ethical conflict.[82]

Describing Indian traders as "a body of respectable, hardworking men, whose position is so misunderstood that their very nationality is overlooked and a name labelled to them ('Coolie traders'), which tends to place them in an exceedingly low level in the estimation of their fellowcreatures," St. Leger continued :

In the face, too, of financial operations, the success of which many of their detractors would envy, one fails to understand the agitation which would place the operators in the same category as the half-heathen Native and confine him to locations, and subject him to the harsher laws by which the Transvaal Kaffir is governed. The impression, which is but too prevalent both in the Transvaal and this Colony, that the quiet and inoffensive Arab shopkeeper, and the equally harmless Indian, who carries his pack of dainty wares from house to house, is 'a coolie', is due largely to an indolent ignorance as to the race whence they sprung. When one reflects that the conception of Brahminism, with its poetic and mysterious mythology, took its rise in the land of the 'Coolie trader', that in that land 24 centuries ago, the almost divine Buddha taught and practised the glorious doctrine of self-sacrifice, and that it was from the plains and mountains of that weird old country that are derived the fundamental truths of the very language we speak, one cannot but help regretting that the children of such a race should be treated as the equals of the children of black heathendom and outer darkness. Those who, for a few moments, have stayed to converse with the Indian trader have been, perhaps, surprised to find they are speaking to a scholar and a gentleman. . . . And it is the sons of this land of light who are despised as coolies, and treated as Kaffirs.

It is about time that those who cry out against the Indian merchant should have pointed out to them, who and what he is. Many of his worst detractors are British subjects enjoying all the privileges and rights of membership in a glorious community. To them the hatred of injustice, and the

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love of fair play is inherent, and when it affects themselves, they have a method of insisting upon their rights and liberties, whether under a foreign government or under their own. Possibly, it has never struck them that the Indian merchant is also a British subject, and claims the same liberties and rights with equal justice. To say the very least of it, if we may be permitted to employ a phrase of Palmerston's days, it is very un-English to claim rights one would not allow to others. The right of trade, as an equal privilege has, since the abolition of the Elizabethan monopolies, become almost a part of the English Constitution, and were anyone to interfere with that right, the privilege of British citizenship would very suddenly come to the front. Because the Indian is more successful in competition and lives on less than the English merchant, is the unfairest and weakest of arguments. The very foundation of English Commerce lies in the fact of our being able to compete more successfully with other nations. Surely, it is protection running to madness when English traders wish the State to intervene to protect them against the more successful operations of their rivals. The injustice to the Indians is so glaring that one is almost ashamed of one's countrymen in wishing to have these men treated as Natives, simply because of their success in trade. The very reason that they have been so successful against the dominant race is sufficient to raise them above that degrading level. . . . Enough has been said to show that the Indian merchant is something more than the 'coolie' of the newspaper, the Dutchman and the disappointed shopkeepers of Pretoria.[83]

Appeal to abstract reason alone, Gandhiji was slowly learning, seldom takes one very far in the face of entrenched self-interest. It has to be backed by an effective sanction. The secret of that sanction the Indians had not yet discovered. They were groping. Petitioning formed a part of that groping. It provided the necessary discipline of objective, patient, industrious search for truth that the practice of Satyagraha calls for and of presenting one's case with such moderation, dispassion and clear irrefragable proof that even the blind could see the justice of it. Removal of ignorance was a preliminary to the enthronement of reason. Petitioning aimed at the first. Freeing reason from the shackles of passion, prejudice and unenlightened selfishness entailed much travail.

Simultaneously with the petition to Lord Ripon, the Indians addressed a representation to Lord Elgin, the Viceroy of India, also. Since Her Majesty's Government had assented to the departure from the London Convention and also to arbitration on sanitary grounds "without consulting Your Excellency's predecessor in office", they urged, their assent was not binding on the Indian Government.

> That the Indian Government should have been consulted is self-evident. . . . Even if Your Excellency were ill-disposed to intervene on your petitioners' behalf at this stage and on this ground alone, the fact that the reasons which induced the above assent did not and do not exist, that in fact Her Majesty's

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Government has been misled by misrepresentations is, your Petitioners submit, sufficient to justify them in praying for Your Excellency's intervention, and Your Excellency in granting the prayer.

But the blood of white kinship proved thicker than the water of "fellow citizenship of the Empire". The "fellow citizenship" formula was invoked only when it came handy as a stick to beat the Kruger regime with. In June 1895, Her Majesty's Government telegraphed acceptance of the Award of the Arbitrator subject to the condition that the Volksraad should repeal the resolution of September 8, 1893, and the Government of the South African Republic should withdraw the circular of December, 1893, so as to allow the courts of justice to give an unfettered interpretation of the Law of 1885 as amended.

Thereupon an influential deputation consisting of Messrs W. C. Bonnerjee,[84] Hardeoram N. Haridas, Parbati C. Roy and T. M. Nair, M. A. Ghani, J. Meerza, and M. M. Bhownaggree, M.P., led by Dadabhai Naoroji waited on Mr Chamberlain at the Colonial Office on August 29. The Secretary of State for the Colonies was accompanied by T. H. Cochrane, M.P., E. Fairfield, C. B., and H. F. Wilson (Private Secretary). The deputation laid before him comprehensively the grievances of the Indians not only in the Transvaal but also in the Orange Free State, Cape Colony and Natal. The principal of these consisted of restrictions upon (i) the acquisition of real property, (ii) the possession of the franchise, (iii) freedom of locomotion by day and night, (iv) the enjoyment of trade licences, and (v) freedom of choice in respect of places of residence and places of business.

In his reply Mr Chamberlain omitted all reference to the Orange Free State.[85] With regard to the Transvaal he omitted to refer to grievances (i), (iii) and (v). With regard to the Cape Colony, he omitted to refer to grievances (i), (iii), (iv) and (v). With regard to Natal also, he omitted to refer to grievances (i), (iii), (iv) and (v).

Regarding the disfranchisement of British Indians in Cape Colony, he admitted that the conditions of the franchise were so drawn that they in fact operated "more frequently to exclude Asiatics than to exclude persons of any other nationality", and that made it "very much more difficult to appeal against than if any class of Her Majesty's subjects were excluded under that name". "But," he regretfully added, "here we are dealing with a self-governing Colony."

This provided an indication of his attitude also on the issue of the right of the Indians to franchise in Natal. But of this later.

As for the Transvaal, the deputation had urged that, since the De Villiers Award had left the point at dispute where it was before the reference, the case should be remitted back to the Arbitrator for his decision on the point at issue, and failing his doing so, steps should be

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taken to obtain the repeal of the Act of 1885, as amended. In reply Mr Chamberlain said that he could not go behind the Arbitration. That would be "destructive of the principle of Arbitration". He had already intimated to the High Commissioner acceptance of the Award on the part of Her Majesty's Indian subject to certain conditions. He would, however, make representation on the subject and from time to time repeat these representations "in the hope that the Government of the Transvaal may find it to be unnecessary to continue a regulation which undoubtedly is likely to cause pain". Whatever his personal feelings in the matter, he was sorry he could go no farther. The Award had already been accepted by Lord Ripon. They must not forget that here he had to deal with "a foreign and friendly Government".[86]

Referring to the remark by one member of the Deputation that they hoped Mr Chamberlain would not regard the Indian grievances "as more fanciful than real", he said that he would not be inclined to say, as had been suggested, that their grievances in this respect were fanciful or imaginative. "I think they are real grievances, and they have not the less importance because *they are sentimental* and moral rather than material" (Italics mine). Obviously the Secretary for Colonies regarded the restrictions as to the acquisition of real property, and the enjoyment of trade licences by the Indians and their confinement to ghetto-like locations for purposes of residence and business, "sentimental or moral" rather than material issues!

His despatch of September 4, 1895, confirming the conditional acceptance, stressed the fact that the Conventions of Pretoria and London were so worded as to leave Asiatics living within the Transvaal Republic free from disabilities in respect of their places of residence, movements, or mode of living. "But," he reiterated,

> for reasons which seemed good to them, and which I do not wish to be understood as questioning, two of my predecessors agreed to entertain the question of modifying the operation of the conventions by local legislation, and such legislation embodied in the Law of 1885 (as modified by that of 1886) is now part and parcel of the law of the South African Republic, is binding on the British Indians who live there, and is not open to objection on the part of the Minister holding any office.[87]

In regard to the award, to which the Indian memorial had objected on various grounds, Mr Chamberlain pointed out that the matter had been left to the arbitrator "at large" and not under "a specific deed of submission", and that the arbitrator had disallowed the claims in the case of both parties, giving instead "what was his own view of the truth and justice of the matter". This Mr Chamberlain apprehended, Chief Justice de Villiers "was entitled to do".[88]

This legalistic statement sounded odd, on the lips of a Minister

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who at this very time was conniving at and even actively encouraging a filibustering raid against a neighbouring state to bolster up the dubious claims of the Uitlanders. Obviously what was sauce for the Uitlander gander was not sauce for the Indian immigrant goose.

Having thus far admitted the extent to which his hands were tied, Mr Chamberlain went on to regret "extremely" that he could not return "a more encouraging" answer to the Indian memorial . . .

> The petitioners have my sympathy. I believe them to be a peaceable, law-abiding, and meritorious body of persons, and I can only hope that, even as matters stand, their undoubted industry and intelligence and their indomitable perseverance, will suffice to overcome any obstacles which may now face them in the pursuit of their avocations.[89]

"The Secretary of State for the Colonies," the despatch sanctimoniously concluded, "reserved to himself the liberty later on to make friendly representations" to the Republic on the advisability of reviewing the situation from "a new point of view", and of deciding "whether it would not be better in the interest of its own burghers to treat the Indians more generously, and to free itself from even the appearance of countenancing a trade jealousy, which I have reason to believe, does not emanate from the governing class in the Republic".

Arbitration thus left the issue that had been referred to it undecided. It could be decided only by instituting a test case. This being the natural sequel to the acceptance of the Award by the British Government, Gandhiji wrote to the British Agent at Pretoria that, although the case would be entered in the name of a member of the Indian community it was but reasonable that Her Majesty's Government should defray the cost, which was bound to be heavy. The British Indians had already incurred heavy expenses in their struggle against degradation and disabilities sought to be placed upon them in the Transvaal, in spite of the protection afforded them against such degradation and disabilities by the 14th Article of the Convention of 1884.

The request was turned down by the British Government. The test case did not come up till 1898, when it was decided against the Indians. That, however, was not the end of the matter.

Little did Gandhiji dream that the issue of the Transvaal Indians which at the time appeared only as incidental to his work in Natal would before long make the Transvaal his main theatre of action and set into motion a chain of developments destined to alter the current of history in more than one country.

12

Following the death of Panda at the hands of Clu-Clu (See p. 342) Cetywayo had made himself ruler of Zululand. His attempt to revive

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the military tradition of Chaka led to a clash with the British authority. In 1879, after the defeat of his warriors, he was deposed and deported to England. Zululand was divided into thirteen units, each under its own native chief, and in each case a British resident was appointed to be "the eyes and ears" of the British Government. Then, when this system broke down, Cetywayo was brought back to rule over a reduced kingdom with diminished authority. But trouble continued.

Natal had for some time past been pressing for leave to annex Zululand, but Her Majesty's Government disclaimed authority there. That gave the Transvaal, debarred from interfering by the London Convention, its opportunity. There were a few Boers living in Zululand. Joined by about 300 others from the Two Republics and the British Colonies, who divested themselves of their former citizenship by a declaration of their own, they set up their "New Republic", round Vryheid as capital, which was soon to be absorbed in the Transvaal. Joubert of the South African Republic was invited to be the President, and surveyors were sent including young Botha, who was to play a vital role in South African history second only to Smuts later, to demarcate the frontiers which would have included St. Lucia Bay. Here a German in the service of the Transvaal had acquired a large cession from a "Native" Chief.

The establishment of a potentially hostile power on the coast posed a threat which prompted the British, after recognising the New Republic, in 1887 to annex Zululand.

Zululand thus became a Crown Colony. It had a small European and a large native (Kaffir) population, and was governed by the Governor of Natal in the Queen's name. The Natal Ministry or the Governor of Natal as such had nothing to do with it. In the township of Melmoth, first to be established, the Indians had in 1888 bought *erven* (sites) i.e. specified pieces of land, worth about £2,000. The township of Eshowe was proclaimed in 1891 and that of Nondweni in 1896. The regulations for the purchase of *erven* in both these townships provided that only persons of European birth and descent would be approved of as occupiers of *erven*.[90]

Many such things in the past had passed unnoticed. But the vigilant Adamji Miyakhan brought it to the notice of the Natal Congress. Gandhiji drew up a memorial which was submitted on February 26, 1896, over the joint signatures of Abdul Karim Hajee and 39 others.

On February 27, C. Walsh, Acting Secretary for Zululand, replied, justifying the Regulations on the ground that they were "the same as the regulations in force for the Eshowe Township proclaimed by His Excellency's predecessor on 28th September, 1891".[91]

Even the *Natal Mercury*, generally hostile to the Indian community's claims, felt outraged. "Zululand is likely soon to have an Indian question all its own," it wrote on February 29.

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Seeing, that Zululand is till a Crown Colony, and therefore, more under the direct eye of the Imperial authorities, we cannot very well see how such rules can be enforced. . . . The territory is a Crown Colony, and, this being so, *it seems strange that rules and regulations can be made for that country which are not permitted in Natal, a responsibly governed Colony.*[92]

On March 4, 1896, Gandhiji wrote to his Excellency requesting on behalf of the Memorialists to order the alteration or amendment of the Regulations with regard to both the townships, so as to do away with the colour distinction "regard being specially had to the events that are now happening concerning the position of the Indians as to property rights in other parts of South Africa."[93]

The request was refused. Thereupon Gandhiji wrote to Dadabhai, "I am now preparing a memorial for the Home Government."[94]

The memorial, which was dated March 11, prayed that in view of the fact that in 1889, when the Township of Melmoth was sold, the Indian community had laid out nearly £2,000 in the purchase of *erven* in that township, they should be allowed to purchase land in Zululand freely,

if only for the reason that they may be able to make their outlay . . . profitable. . . . If a Crown Colony can refuse property rights to a portion of Her Majesty's subjects, the Governments of the South African Republic and the Orange Free State would in a greater measure be justified in doing likewise or even going further.[95]

In the meantime Dadabhai Naoroji has set to work at his end in London. The British Committee of the Indian National Congress in London took up the matter. The London *Times* gave nearly two columns to it.

Henry du Pre Labouchere, hot on the trail of Chamberlain for his suspected complicity in the Jameson Raid, was even more emphatic. In his paper *Truth* he wrote :

Owing to the attention which is being devoted to the grievances of the 'outlanders' in the Transvaal, those of the other 'outlanders' in South Africa appear in danger of being forgotten. To the disabilities under which Indian subjects of the Queen labour in Her Majesty's Colonies and possessions in South Africa, a serious addition has lately been made by a notice in the *Natal Government Gazette.*

He concluded with the hope that Mr Chamberlain would instruct the Governor of Zululand to withdraw "these monstrous regulations, which are aimed directly against the Indian community".[96]

True to tradition the Zululand officials, it seems, acting in collusion with the local whites, had kept the Colonial Office in the dark as to the full facts of the case. On April 10, 1896,

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Mr Chamberlain replying to a question by Mancherjee M. Bhownaggree, who had after Dadabhai Naoroji been returned to the House of Commons, made the startling disclosure that while it was true that the proclamation relating to the townships of Nondweni and Eshowe excluded those who were not of European birth or descent from purchase or holding land, the fact of "the purchase of land by British Indians at Melmoth in 1889 does not appear to have been reported to the Colonial Office".[97] He promised to give the subject his careful attention when the Indian petition arrived.

Luck favoured the Indians. Heavily under fire after the Jameson Raid, the British Government was in no mood to be led by its Zululand officials into sanctioning a course of policy that might provide grist to President Kruger's propaganda mill in his quarrel over the Uitlander question. The prohibition was removed.

13

The origin of the Commando system, under which every burgher was liable to compulsory military service, has already been described (See p. 335). In 1894, when the British subjects in the South African Republic were being commandeered to serve along with the burgher on commando (See p. 370) to suppress a small rising in the Transvaal (Malaboch War), they had protested against it on the ground that the British subjects were not entitled to full Burgher rights and were subjected to disabilities in the Republic.[98] Submitting to pressure of public opinion, the British Government had to intervene; and in December, 1894, a treaty was provisionally entered into between Sir Henry Loch, the British High Commissioner, and President Kruger, exempting all British subjects residing in the South African Republic from personal military service. In ratifying it, however, the Volksraad, in its resolution of October 7, 1895, went out of its way to declare that "by the British subjects shall be understood white persons" only.

Thereupon the British Indian Defence Committee in the Transvaal —counterpart of the Natal Indian Congress—(See p. 442) telegraphically protested to London on October 22, 1895, against this odious racial distinction and intimated that a Memorial would follow.

Acknowledging receipt of the text of this telegram, H. O. Arnold Foster, M.P. on the following day wrote to the Secretary of British Indian Defence Committee at Johannesburg :

> I shall await the arrival of the memorial referred to in your telegram. . . . Meanwhile I have only to repeat that I regard the action taken by the Boers with regard to the British Indian subjects in the Transvaal as not only gross indignity but likely if pressed in to raise very serious questions far outside the limits of the Boer State.[99]

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The Memorial that Gandhiji drew up was submitted to the Home Government on May 14, over the signatures of 130 persons, including M. C. Camroodeen, Abdul Gani and Mahomed Ismael of the South African Republic. Pointing out that the Commando treaty itself did not qualify the words "British subjects" at all, it prayed that, as the resolution instead of accepting the treaty *in toto* had modified it, it should not be accepted by Her Majesty's Government in its modified form, on that ground alone, if for no other.

It was openly avowed at the time the commotion was going on that the Uitlander population of the Republic would gladly serve in the Malaboch campaign, if only they were treated as citizens and given the Franchise. If, therefore, the European or, as the resolution puts it, 'White' British subjects should be exempt because of the political disabilities they labour under, much more, it is respectfully submitted, should the Indian British subjects who not only do not enjoy any political rights in the South African Republic but are treated as little more than chattels of which fact the resolution is another indication.[100]

The general persecution of the Indians throughout South Africa provided an additional reason against Her Majesty's Government countenancing this fresh onslaught on the freedom of the Indians.

In forwarding this memorial to Mr Chamberlain Dadabhai wrote that as the Government of the South African Republic had by defining British subjects as only white persons, deprived all British Indian subjects "of that protection from compulsory military service which Her Majesty's Government had found it necessary to insist upon for all British subjects", he hoped that the Home Government would disallow "this arbitrary limitation of the meaning of the term British subjects".[101]

When the second session of the fourteenth Parliament of Queen Victoria opened on February 11, 1896, a show-down between Boer and Briton had become inevitable. The opposition was clamouring for a searching enquiry into the whole episode of the Raid and the conduct of the Colonial Office in that regard. On February 13, Arnold Foster seconded Henry du Pre Labouchere's amendment to the Queen's Address, representing to Her Majesty that "no investigation into recent occurrences in South Africa will be complete unless it extends to the financial and political action of the Chartered Company of South Africa". In the circumstances any further "appeasement" of the Kruger regime was unthinkable. Reflecting the prevailing mood, *The Times* wrote in respect of the Volksraad's resolution :

The thing is monstrous on the face of it. We might now see a levy of British Indian subjects driven at the point of the Transvaal bayonets against the bayonets of British troops.[102]

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Thus forced, Chamberlain took a firm stand. Answering a question in the Commons put by Bhownaggree, on February 14, 1896, whether his attention had been drawn to the discriminating clause in the Volksraad's resolution ratifying the Commando Treaty, he stated that "steps have been taken to prevent the introduction of a colour distinction."[103]

14

In the midst of his professional and public activities Gandhiji did not forget his loves—Vegetarianism and the Esoteric Christian Brotherhood. His work in connection with the latter has already been noticed (See p. 325). An intensely practical man, he was also a dreamer of great dreams. It was this combination of the mystic and the realist that made him unique. Vegetarianism and the gospel of the Esoteric Christian Brotherhood, with its emphasis on Vegetarianism as an integral part of the spiritual way of life, appeared to him at this stage of his life to hold the key to the recovery of the Golden Age. As such they had to him a significance all their own. In his nascent enthusiasm he even fancied them to be a cure-all for problems mundane and ultra-mundane—including the political ones that he was handling.

He was, therefore, overjoyed to learn that there were in South Africa several settlements of Trappist missionaries who were vegetarians. One such was at Mariann Hill near Pine Town—a little village at an elevation of 11,000 feet with a beautiful climate. Ever since he had read about this band of Vegetarian missionaries in Anna Kingsford's *Perfect Way in Diet* as a student in England, he had longed to meet them. In April, 1895, he with a friend visited the Trappist Monastery at Pine Town.

They set out on a beautiful morning. The path lay through a tree-studded valley overflowing with the sweet murmur of a rivulet that ran through it. A lovelier walk with lovelier surroundings could hardly be imagined. The valley and the cluster of hills on which the Abbey stood were carpeted with verdure. At the Colony they were welcomed with tamarind water and pineapple. A solemn stillness brooded over the substantial red brick building, broken only by the hum of activity in the various workshops, where about 1,200 "native" children and adults were taught various crafts—blacksmith's, tinsmith's, carpenter's, shoemaker's, tanner's etc.

The settlement was a self-contained quiet little model village, run on the "truest republican principles" of liberty, equality and fraternity, "Here every man is a brother, every woman a sister". Deeply impressed by their life of prayer and "toil unsevered from tranquillity", in an article he wrote for the *Vegetarian* he recorded,

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Both the brothers and the sisters observe a strict vow of silence and of chastity. No brother or sister may speak except those who are allowed to by the Abbot, who is the head of the Trappists in Natal. And those are only allowed to speak who have to go to town to make purchases or to look after visitors. . . .

A model trappist gets up at 2 a.m. and devotes four hours to prayer and contemplation. At six, he has his breakfast, which consists of bread and coffee, or some such simple foods. He dines at twelve, and makes a meal of bread and soup, and fruits. He sups at six in the evening and goes to bed at 7 or 8 p.m. The brothers eat no fish, flesh or fowl. They discard even eggs. . . . They take no intoxicating liquors. . . . None may keep money for private use. All are equally rich or poor. . . . They may not leave the limits of the settlement, except those who are permitted to do so on business. They may not read newspapers and books that are not religious. They may not read any religious books but only those that are allowed.[104]

In the refectory no table cloths were used. The wooden dining tables made in the settlement were without polish. The knives and spoons were "the cheapest to be had in Durban". Instead of glass they used enamelled ware. Nowhere was there any trace of colour distinction. The "natives" worked side by side with the whites, and were accorded the same treatment. He was delighted to find that

while the mission schools of other denominations very often enable the natives to contract all the terrible vices of the Western civilisation and very rarely produce any moral effect on them, the natives of the Trappist mission are patterns of simplicity, virtue and gentleness. It was a treat to see them saluting passers-by in a humble yet dignified manner.[105]

What struck him even more was the fact that, though almost all Germans, the missionaries made no attempt to impose their tongue on their converts. Alongside arts and crafts, instruction was given in English and Zulu.

The settlement had a printing press, a flour mill worked by water power, and an oil press. These and the workshops supplied to the settlers practically all their requirements. A deep religious atmosphere pervaded the settlement.

Every room has a Cross and, on the entrance, a small receptacle for holy water which every inmate reverently applies to his eyelids, the forehead and the chest. Even the quick walk to the flour mill is not without some reminder of the Cross. . . . (On) little rocks . . . are carved the various inscriptions reminding you of the scenes of the Calvary. . . .

Some of the inscriptions were: "Jesus falls a first time"; "Jesus falls a second time"; "Simon carries the Cross"; "Jesus is laid in his mother's lap"; etc. etc. These inscriptions were so evenly placed that

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no sooner had the visitor completed his thoughts on one inscription than another met his gaze, making the whole walk "an exercise in calm contemplation",[106] undisturbed by the din and bustle of the outside world.

Three hundred monks and 120 nuns lived in the twelve Trappist settlements in South Africa.

> Such are our Vegetarians in Natal. Though they do not make of Vegetarianism a creed, though they base it simply on the ground that a Vegetarian diet helps them to crucify the flesh better, and though perhaps they are not even aware of the existence of the Vegetarian societies, and would not even care to read any Vegetarian literature, where is the Vegetarian who would not be proud of this noble band, even a casual intercourse with whom fills one with a spirit of love, charity and self-sacrifice, and who are a living testimony to the triumph of Vegetarianism from a spiritual point of view?[107]

Their motto, "*Ora et labora*", was later embodied in essence in his own creed—service to God through selfless service to humanity. The lightness and grace with which they carried their austerity captured his heart. There were no morose faces or sour looks. "Wherever we went a beaming smile and a lowly bow greeted us. . . . A better instance of undying faith and perfect, implicit obedience could not be found anywhere else. If this be Roman Catholicism," he exclaimed, "everything said against it is a lie". He was referring to a Protestant clergyman's criticism that Roman Catholics were sickly and sad. The lesson he brought with him was that "no religion is divine or devilish in its essence; a religion appears divine or devilish—as its professors choose to make it appear".

Later, when he launched an experiment in community living at Tolstoy Farm for the Satyagrahis, based on the principle of simplicity and body labour, he sent one of his companions to this Trappist settlement to learn sandal-making. The pattern of life he saw there became an inspiring model for his various Ashrams. He kept harking back to it again and again. In 1934 at a gathering of workers in the Harijan cause, defining the ideal that they should emulate, he nostalgically recalled his visit to the Trappists at Pine Town forty years back.

> They had nothing like privacy for themselves . . . they had to get up at 2.30 a.m. . . they strictly observed the vow of silence . . . Their monastery was a model of beauty . . . with not a particle of dust anywhere, and there was a sweet silence pervading the whole atmosphere.[108]

Not less significant than the spiritual was the political thesis that he based on the philosophy of Vegetarianism. Because vegetarianism was not in vogue among the South African whites, the vocation of vegetable

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and fruit growing had been left to Indians, who being vegetarians took to agriculture without difficulty. This had aroused the jealousy of the whites, who, in their endeavour to push out the Indians from South Africa, were pursuing "a dog-in-the-manger and suicidal policy". But for their stubborn shortsightedness, the Garden Colony could easily support double or even treble the population it now did. Adoption of Vegetarianism thus provided a solution to the problem of "overcrowding" which was stated to be the reason behind the outcry against Asiatic Immigration.

The whole of the Republic, although the soil is very fruitful, remains a desert of dust. And if the gold mines could not be worked from any cause, thousands of men would be thrown out of employment and literally starved to death. Is there not here a great lesson to be learnt? The flesh-eating habits have really tended to retard the progress of the community and, indirectly, to create division among the two great communities which ought to be united and work hand in hand.[109]

The change in their food habits would benefit not only the mental but also the physical health of the whites. "I know that many doctors would be simply starving if there were no Europeans or their flesh-pots, and that by their thrifty and temperate habits, both attributable to vegetarianism, Indians can successfully compete with Europeans."

He took up the cudgels for vegetarianism again sometime later. In spite of nearly nine months of advertising and quiet persuasion, vegetarian propaganda had made very little headway in South Africa.

People here think of very little else than gold. The gold fever is so infectious in these regions that it has smitten the highest and the lowest, the spiritual teachers included. They find no time for higher pursuits of life; they find no time to think of the beyond.

This was all the more deplorable as nature in her bounty had endowed South Africa and particularly Natal with advantages that made it eminently suited for the practice of vegetarianism. It was for men of means and vision to come forward and take in hand cultivation of fruit and vegetables. But they would have to shed their prejudice against the Indians.

If a few men could be induced to turn their attention from the Johannesburg gold to the quieter method of earning money by cultivation and to get rid of their colour prejudice, there is no doubt that every variety of vegetable and fruit could be grown in Natal. . . . They have got the Indians to help them, but they simply would not make use of them owing to the colour prejudice. . . I have a letter from a gardener who, much as he would like to employ Indian labour, is handicapped owing to this prejudice.

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Vegetarians, both English and Indians, had thus an unending scope for patriotic work :

> The line of marriage between white British subjects and Indians is getting thicker day by day in South Africa. The best English and Indian statesmen are of opinion that Britain and India can be indissolubly united by the chain of love. The spiritualists anticipate good results from such a union. The South African white British subjects are doing their utmost to retard, and, if possible, to prevent such a union. It may be that some Vegetarians may come forward to arrest such a catastrophe.[110]

Equipped with knowledge, and with passion for vegetarianism flaming in their breast, they should go forth as missionaries and set up fruit and vegetable farms *as an economic enterprise* in countries deemed suitable for the purpose. Good ethics, he insisted, must also be good economics. These farms would then become "real centres of vegetarianism" in those parts. But, for this their vegetarianism had to be "a religion", and not merely a "hygienic convenience".

In a letter to the *Natal Mercury* in the year following he formulated his thesis on vegetarianism as the means *par excellence* for man's regeneration. The occasion was provided by a leading article in that journal, reviewing *The New Science of Healing* by that German exponent of nature cure, Louis Kuhne. A host of world famous figures including Buddha, Pythagoras, Plato, Porphyry, Wesley, Shelley and Edison (the scientist) were vegetarians. The Christian vegetarians claimed that Jesus also was a vegetarian. "And there does not seem to be anything to oppose that view, except the reference to His having taken broiled fish after the Resurrection." The practice of all the religious teachers of the world showed that "nothing was more deterimental to the spiritual faculty of man than gross feeding on flesh". Similarly, "the agnosticism, the materialism and the religious indifference of the present age" could be traced "to much flesh eating and wine drinking and consequent disappearance, partial or total, of the spiritual faculty in men". Some of the most intellectual men of the world had practised abstemiousness "especially at the time of writing their best works". Vegetarian moralists had mourned over the fact that "selfish men for the sake of gratifying their lustful and diseased appetite did not scruple to force the butcher's trade on a portion of mankind". Even without the stimulants of flesh foods and wine it was difficult enough to "restrain . . . passions and escape Satan's challenges". To resort to meat and drink, which added to those difficulties, was to tempt Providence. For those who believed in the Bible there was the testimony of the Holy Book that before the Fall man was vegetarian.

> And God said : behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in which is fruit of a tree

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yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat; and it was so.[111]

Finally, meat eating might be excusable for the "unconverted" but not for those who regarded themselves as "born again". Their state "surely should be equal, if not superior, to that of man before the 'Fall'." According to the prophecy in the Apocalypse, in times of Restitution :

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. . . . And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountains; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.[112]

Those events might be far off yet for the whole world, Gandhiji concluded, but why should not those, "who know and can—the Christians—enact them for themselves, at any rate? There can be no harm in anticipating them, and, maybe, thereby their approach may be considerably hastened."[113]

* * *

Nothing is so infectious as sincere enthusiasm, or so endearing as an innocent little "fad" and the capacity to enjoy a laugh at one's expense. Gandhiji's messianic fervour in the cause of Vegetarianism and Esoteric Christianity drew to him many an earnest spirit from among the whites who were politically opposed to him. His naivete provided them with abundant opportunity for raising eyebrows in amusement. Tantalised by a "letter to the editor" to popularise Esoteric Christian Union's literature in which, quoting Abbe Constant's blurb, Gandhiji had claimed that in Edward Maitland's *The Perfect Way* was at length to be found an answer "complete satisfactory and consolatory" to the threefold eternal riddle of human existence, the *Natal Mercury* had this dig at him.

'Whence come we, what are we, whither go we?' This is not part of an advertisement of Eno's Fruit Salt; they are the three supreme questions which, we are told, humanity has always asked itself, and which, Mr Gandhi assures us, find an answer *complete and satisfactory* in one or two little philosophical works in which he is interested.

If you have quite recovered, we will proceed. It is certainly enough to take away one's breath. It has been pretty generally acknowledged that this wonderful nineteenth century (this *so-called* 19th century as the cynical Irishman termed it) will be chiefly notable for the extraordinary advancement made in science—of which the steam-engine and other monsters are palpable and palpitating manifestations—but all this will be almost lost to sight in view of the great epoch which is dawning (or shall we say has dawned) with

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the advent of these 'complete and satisfactory' answers. And yet we skim over the marvellous news with a yawn, and pass on to the share market report as if nothing had happened![114]

What added piquancy to the sally was the fact that, before he took to naturopathy, the Mahatma was virtually a slave to Eno's Fruit Salt. Every morning he put a spoonful of it at the bottom of a tumbler, poured in water and gulped the fizzing liquid that gave him relief. Everyone within his circle rallied him over the habit, as he used afterwards to recall with many a chuckle. The editorial writer of the *Mercury* evidently knew this.

Gandhiji must have thoroughly enjoyed the quip for he carefully snipped and pasted it in his clipping book. There it still bears witness to the priceless and rare "giftie" with which the Scottish Bard fervently prayed that we might all be blessed:

"To see oursels as *ithers* see us."

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CHAPTER XX

"WHAT'S ON THE WATER?"

1

THE YEAR of grace 1894 was on its last legs. Natal was convulsed over the Franchise Amendment Bill. The "prominent representative" who had visited England was reported to have warned Lord Ripon, that if the Bill was rejected another measure would follow and would "probably be made more stringent". But he had not disclosed what his Lordship had said to draw that remark. "The answer of the Secretary of State," the Ministerial organ protested, "was still being awaited".[1] Dame rumour had it, however, that the Bill had been disallowed. Private advices received from London by several individuals were also to the same effect. "Her Majesty," the *Natal Witness* categorically stated on January 11, 1895, "has been advised to exercise her power".[2]

The Times had remarked:

> The position—which was viewed with alarm and disfavour throughout South Africa, even when the coolie, under the bonds of his indenture, represented a strictly working population, without permanent interests in the country—has gradually assumed a more serious aspect, as an independent Asiatic population has settled itself in Natal, and has acquired the Parliamentary vote.[3]

To clear up the mystery a representative of the *Times of Natal* called on Natal officials on the following day. He was told "the reply is now on the water and may be expected by any mail".[4]

Suspecting that the Ministerial statement concealed more than it revealed, the *Natal Witness* commented that no sane person would believe for a moment that the Government did not know the contents of the despatch in question even if the despatch itself had not yet arrived. Mr Peace (Sir Walter), the Agent General of Natal in London, must have kept his government well informed.[5] Further, if the despatch was known to be on its way, the date of its arrival could be calculated within a day or two. How a reply, which was stated by the Natal officials to have been sent by a certain steamer, could be expected to arrive by any mail was "one of those things which no one could pretend to understand". Nevertheless, the working men's party's paper went on to remark with biting irony, the reply obtained by the *Times of Natal* must be taken to be "quite correctly given", because it

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was "just such a one as a person in perplexity would be likely to make".[6]

Referring to the Government spokesman's statement at Bellair that if the Bill were vetoed it would be passed again next session and possibly with new restrictions (See p. 462) the *Natal Witness* wrote: "We very much question whether the Ministry collectively have backbone enough for a stand-up fight with the Imperial Government."[7]

Presently, the *Natal Advertiser* too joined the chorus. It was some weeks, it wrote on February 6, 1895, since they had been officially told that Lord Ripon's reply was "on the water". If that was so "it should have been in the hands of the Ministry for some time", but the public had heard nothing of it.

> It may be perhaps that all this information is being reserved for the great meeting on the 14th. Well, we shall see what we shall see, and hear what we shall hear.[8]

At last on February 2, the *Natal Mercury* came out with an explanation. The cable message which was understood to refer to the Indian Franchise Bill had "turned out to have reference to another subject". The Government had, however, been informed telegraphically that the question was receiving "serious consideration of Her Majesty's Government".[9] The fact that so much time was being taken, the Government's mouthpiece wrote the following day, was "on the whole" to be regarded as a hopeful sign. But, whether the Bill came back or not, it would not "alter in one fractional part the determination of the Colonists to pass such a measure again sooner or later".[10]

Refusing to accept the *Mercury's* story about the telegram having been misread the *Natal Advertiser* wrote:

> It seems strange that there should have been an error of this description. If Downing Street cablegrams are transmitted in cypher, surely a proper key exists. If not in cypher, the mistake is all the more curious.[11]

Dawned the "great day" on which the Colonists had expected that they would be told all that had passed between the Natal Ministry and the Home Government in regard to the Bill. But Sir John's Durban speech on that day breathed not a syllable respecting the position of the Indian franchise question, which drew from the *Advertiser* the withering comment that unless the Imperial Government had "specially chartered some old fashioned sailing ship" for the conveyance of the despatch, the document must have reached Natal by this time. "The reticence of the Premier on this subject . . . lends colour to the report that the Bill has been disallowed."[12]

This suspicion was further strengthened when the *Natal Mercury* significantly shifted the emphasis from the Indian Franchise question to the Immigration Bill in its coverage of Sir John's Durban speech.

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The mandate of the Colony, that the £10,000 vote should be abolished, it claimed, had been "faithfully obeyed", and there was "every reason to believe" that the political danger of the Indian vote would be placed beyond the range of future apprehension as to the results of a *general enfranchisement* of Indians.

The Imperial Government may throw out the Bill passed last session, but it will be passed again and again if need be, until Her Majesty has been pleased not to disallow it.[13]

Interpreting this pompous statement either as a smokescreen, or more likely, a climb-down, the *Natal Witness* shrewdly remarked that the manner in which the Ministerialist organ had referred to the franchise question led one to suppose that "the writer was under inspiration, and instructed to prepare the Colony for the announcement that the Bill of last session has not been sanctioned."[14] The obvious discrepancy between the declaration about the Bill being "passed again and again" and the statement that the Home Government's reply was 'on the water', it was suggested, meant that the Ministry had been endeavouring "to shake Lord Ripon's resolution by further correspondence". If these surmises were correct much valuable time had been allowed to be lost for which the Colony would not readily forgive the Ministers.

It is all very well to employ brave words and to threaten brave acts if it can reasonably be supposed that they will break down opposition; but a prudent political leader will make sure of his ground and count the possible cost before committing himself to a course of action from which it would not be easy, if not impossible, to retreat.[15]

By now even the *Natal Advertiser* had begun to smell a rat in the Natal Ministry's circumlocution. It was some weeks ago, it wrote on February 28, since the Government had intimated that an important despatch on the subject was "on the water". Yet nothing had been heard about the communication. "There is also the fact that the Indian Franchise Bill is not among those which have been published as having received the Imperial assent."[16]

A fortnight later it returned to the charge. "Surely Lord Ripon has not pigeon-holed" the Bill "for ever!" The Government were behaving very badly "to both constituencies and the members" by dealing with the issue in a hole-and-corner fashion, instead of taking them into their confidence:

It may be that the Colony will be advised to take up a position of defiance to the Imperial Government over the matter, or to submit to what is known to be the wish of the latter and allow the Indian vote to possibly control the future of the Colony. Either alternative is one requiring grave and serious deliberation, which a Responsible Ministry should certainly give time for,

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But our present Cabinet seems to think it is all sufficient in itself, and that it can do what it likes.[17]

2

By the end of April it looked fairly certain that the Home Government would not have the Indian Franchise Bill. The Bill, however, it was consolingly suggested, "has not been vetoed but simply held in abeyance".[18] This the Home Government could do as constitutionally it had two years within which to assent or dissent to legislation. What was considered curious was that the Natal Ministry had said nothing about the Bill. What little was known had come through a private member or through the London press. "I am afraid," the *Natal Advertiser* columnist remarked, "there is just a little too much of the ostrich about our Cabinet".[19]

On June 21, 1895, the Rosebery Ministry fell. Ripon resigned, packed his portfolio and went to his mansions. Five days later Joseph Chamberlain of the Birmingham firm of screw makers occupied the vacated chair and became the Secretary of State for Colonies. On July 10, 1895, Sir John Robinson for the first time intimated, in reply to Mr Tatham's query regarding Indian Franchise Bill, that the Government were still in communication with the Colonial Office on the subject and added that they intended bringing another measure. The Government had "reason to believe" that the Bill, prepared at the Colonial Office, would meet with the approval of Her Majesty's Government and they had "every reason to believe" it would satisfy all parties.[20]

This roundabout way of admitting that the Bill had been disallowed made the *Natal Advertiser* acidly remark: "This may be so; but the question is whether it will meet with the approval of Colonists of Natal."

It then proceeded to ask:

> Seeing that our Government are already in possession of the views of the Home authorities on the question, why is it that the proposed new Bill has not been introduced this session? Or rather the question might be asked why they have not re-introduced the old Bill?[21]

Soon after Sir John's statement, the columnist of the *Natal Advertiser* remarked: "At last the cat is out of the bag." Months and months ago the press had stated positively that the Home Government had refused its assent to this Bill. "First the report was denied and afterwards the Government were persistently reticent on the subject. At last Mr Tatham extracted a hesitating statement."[22] After taunting the Ministry on having made "discretion the better part of its valour" in respect of its threat to "pass the original Bill 'again and again' until

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it was forced down to the throat of Downing Street", the writer went on to observe:

I have always maintained that the Home Government would never permit the disenfranchisement of the Indians, and I believe it will be found I was right when the promised measure sees the light. The true way of dealing with this question is to create an educational and property qualification for the franchise.[23]

Scared by the prospect of the alternative solution the *Natal Witness* warned that while the Natal Government were "dilly-dallying" with the Indian question, "one moment putting their foot down and the next withdrawing it", the Asiatics were making the most of their opportunity. "Now that another year of grace has been given them (by the hung-up Bill) they will turn it to profit by getting as many more as possible on the electoral list."[24] The Bill to be introduced in the next session, it remarked ironically, would be one of the "most remarkable measures ever seen" that would satisfy "the Imperial and Indian Governments, the Colonists and the aspiring Indian immigrant".[25]

The London *Times*, till recently the mouthpiece of the opposition, and now the recognised mouthpiece and the principal repository of the confidence of the new Government, had under the previous Ministry more or less supported the Colonists' viewpoint. But its recent comment on the question of the British Indians in the Transvaal had given the Colonists the impression that "consideration for the Indian trader" was to "override every other". They felt perturbed.

An Indian Deputation waited on the new Colonial Secretary on August 29. On Naoroji pointing out that the proposed Natal Franchise Bill excluded Asiatic *eo nomine* Chamberlain was reported in a summary cabled to Natal to have remarked:

Yes, but there, permit me to say, the law is not passed. . . . I think that is undoubtedly a provision which requires the most serious consideration. It is now engaging my attention, and I trust that I may be able at a later period to make a satisfactory statement with regard to it. . . . Your claims and your requests have my most sympathetic consideration, and . . . while I am bound to point out to you ,that I am not so powerful as . . . you imagine I am, yet you may be sure that whatever influence I do possess will be exercised in your favour.[26]

What Mr Chamberlain had only tacitly implied in his reply to the Indian deputation was very shortly afterwards said for him openly in the columns of *The Times*. "The proposed law in Natal disqualifying Asiatics under that name," it wrote, "will be disallowed, so that there the grievance will no longer exist".[27] Strongly backing up the Indian view of the question, *The Times* further observed:

It is to be feared that the ordinary colonist, wherever settled, thinks much more of his intermediate interests than of those of the great Empire which

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protects him, and he has some difficulty in recognising a fellow subject in the Hindoo or the Parsee. The duty of the Colonial office is to enlighten him and to see that fair treatment is extended to British subjects of whatever colour.[28]

The Times also said, "British Indian subjects are entitled to seek subsistence in South Africa",[29] and further that "except on the part of a section of the mercantile community no desire has ever been shown in South Africa to deprive the Asiatic of his means of livelihood".[30]

Mr Chamberlain's reply coupled with *The Times*' remarks sent up the whole of the South African press in a blaze. The *Star* wrote:

Frankly, whites do not recognise Hindoos as fellow-subjects in the sense in which *The Times* uses the expression. . . . Rather than see him swamping the white voter at the polling booth or sitting in the legislature, *there are thousands of whites who would fight tomorrow*, and the sooner Mr Chamberlain thoroughly assimilates that unquestionable fact, the more successful is he likely to be in his dealings with South Africa (Italics mine).

"It will be observed," the *Star* went on to add, "that the Right Honourable gentleman indicated that an Act specifically disfranchising Asiatics in Natal would be disallowed but did not say that any attempt would be made to prevent the Colony from achieving the same end by other means."

There was, however, another weighty reason, the *Star* urged, which ought to stiffen the Colony's back in dealing with Downing Street on this question. "One of these days" in some not unforeseeable future,

perhaps in the presence of some common danger from outside, something will come of the ideal which most of us cherish of South African Union, and it is not too much to say that there will be considerable hesitation in admitting to the South African family any State which is cursed with a coolie vote.[31]

The dream that "most of us cherish" was to be shattered not by the curse of "a coolie vote", as the English Uitlanders' journal had put it, but by the *demarche* of its compatriots for vote in the Republic, which Oom Paul with much greater reason dreaded as a curse. But the dust of racial prejudice, which they themselves had lashed up, had obscured the vision and blinded the judgment of the English Uitlanders and their friends. Even the sober-minded *Natal Mercury* let itself go as follows:

The people of South Africa have no particular objection to allowing Indians the same political privileges they have in India, but we decidedly object to them . . . claiming to be placed on a political equality with Europeans. It is by British energy and money that the Colony has been built up. . . . The Indian seems to be more or less of a parasite in his mode of settlement in a country. He does not go first to open up and colonise. He comes afterwards to reap what he hath not sown.[32]

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A few days later it again wrote that it was all very well for *The Times* to tell the Colonists that Indians were perfectly within their rights in seeking subsistence in South Africa, but their illustrious contemporary *The Times* "would hum to a very different tune . . . if England were overrun with Indians as we are". It then went on to say:

The Times considers it the duty of the Colonial Office to enlighten colonists regarding the position of British Indians as fellow-subjects. Our view of the matter is that it . . . (should) set itself the task of enlightening Indians as to their duties when they come to a British Colony.[33]

It concluded with a veiled threat:

If Mr Chamberlain starts any meddling here, it will be muddling and will cause an outburst of feeling that may astonish the new Colonial Secretary. If the people of South Africa are of one mind on any subject at all it is on this question of the Indian franchise.[34]

The *Express* warned that *The Times* and others must understand that the British Indian subjects were not wanted and were not likely to be well treated in the Colony for any length of time. "An Indian is good only in his place, and India is the best place for him."[35]

The *Natal Advertiser* characterised *The Times* article as "most offensive in its tone to self-governing colonies", which should be answered "at once with a very plain intimation" that "any attempt to bully" would be "resented".[36]

The Times had been "lecturing and lecturing" the white Colonists of South Africa on "the general principle", the *South African Times* remarked but this was not a matter which could or should be decided on general principles.

The Times claims that they (Indians) should receive the full rights to which they are entitled by the fact that they were born under the British flag. On the contrary, we think that Natal has a right to insist that they should be denied any privileges to which they would not be entitled in India. We know how *The Times* treats the Indian Congress and jeers at 'Padgett M.P.'—whether his name be Schwann or W. S. Caine—who is anxious to grant to the Hindoo the power of self-government. In England it does not matter if a few resident Parsees and Babus have votes—they are utterly unable to turn an election one way or another. But in Natal . . . give the coolie a vote and a Parnell or even a Tim Healy and the coolie will govern the country and cause endless trouble between Natal and the adjacent colonies and States.[37]

"If the ideas of *The Times* were to be carried to their full logical extent," the *Natal Witness* commented, "they would simply produce a state of things which would be utterly intolerable."

As regards the "fellow subject" theory,

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Though Indians may be British subjects, they are in every respect as completely aliens in this country as Polish or Russian Jews are in England, and we do not recognise any call upon us to accept them 'in the common interest of the Empire'. The *Colonies have no interests in India, and* except as a mere matter of sentiment, *would care very little if it ceased to be an appanage of England.*[38]

Besides, if the workman was to be protected in England against a reduction of wages by foreign competition, wrote the working man party's journal, surely "the merchant and the storekeeper in South Africa" had "as much claim to be protected against the competition of dishonest Arabs and Indians". With a final fusillade of choice epithets, it concluded:

The Indian in South Africa is, as far as his knowledge of our modes of government goes, on a level with the idiot whom they would keep out of England, and it is because he would be a safe voter for a most ineligible class of Parliamentary candidates that we desire to prevent his having the franchise. . . . The Indian will not be a pauper alien. His natural thrift and industry will forbid that. But in time . . . he will cause pauperism for others.[39]

Noticing the ugly turn that the controversy had taken, Gandhiji tried once more to bring it back from threats to the plane of reason. On September 2, he replied to the *Natal Mercury:*

If you object to the Indian having the same rights because British 'energy and money' have built up this Colony, you should clearly object to the Germans and the French also. On the same principle the descendants of the pioneers who shed their blood may well object to even those coming from England and pushing them out.[40]

The South African people, it had been said, objected to giving Indians equal political rights because they did not enjoy them in India. But statutorily the Indians enjoyed equal political rights with Europeans. Wherever in India the Europeans were allowed to vote Indians were not excluded. To instance : voting rights for municipalities and the Legislative Council. The Indians in the Colony as well as in other parts of South Africa would be "quite satisfied" if they could only enjoy the same rights as the Europeans would enjoy under similar circumstances.

The Indian question had a local as well as Imperial aspect, Gandhiji clarified. Whether the Colonists liked it or not, the Indian was after all their fellow subject,

England does not want to let go her hold of India, and at the same time she does not want to rule her with an iron rod. Her statesmen say that they want so much to endear the English rule to the Indians that they would not have any other. . . . Having invited the Indians to the Colony,

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how can the responsible Colonists . . . escape the natural consequences of the introduction of the Indian labour?[41]

Marston T. Francis, who had for several years lived in India, challenged Gandhiji's statement about the Indians' enjoying political equality with the Europeans in the mother country (India). The chairman of a municipality in India, he wrote, was always a covenanted officer of the Indian Civil Service, and though Indians could vote at the municipal elections and became members of the Legislative Councils, things were so constituted that they could never outvote the European members and "arrogate to themselves supreme authority".[42]

In refutation Gandhiji pointed out (September 15, 1895) that the President of the Bombay Corporation at the time was an Indian Solicitor. True, the Legislative Councils in India were not as representative as in Natal, but whatever the limits of the franchise in India they applied to all without distinction of colour.

The Indians had amply proved their capacity for understanding the principle of representation. This had been admitted by no less an authority on India than Sir William Wilson Hunter, who in a recent article on "Indian Affairs" in *The Times* had written:

> The battlefield has always formed the short cut to an honourable equality among races. But the Indians are also proving their title to our respect by the slower and more difficult methods of civil life. There never was a greater experiment made in the constitutional government of dependencies than the expansion of the Indian Legislative Council on a partially elective basis three years ago. . . . So far as Bengal is concerned—the province in which the elective system seemed fraught with the greatest difficulty—the experiment, after a severe trial, has proved a success.[43]

There were very few posts more responsible than that of a Civil Commissioner, yet an Indian had recently been appointed to that post. Similarly, Gandhiji pointed out, Indians had occupied the position of Chief Justice both in Bengal and Madras. It ill behooved responsible persons to widen the gulf between the two communities. It should, on the contrary, be their endeavour to bridge it.

Commending Gandhiji's reply to Marston T. Francis, for its cogency and moderation, the African "natives" journal the *Inkanyiso*, under the caption "For Justice' Sake", trenchantly observed that Gandhiji had conclusively shown that in his own country the Indian was not excluded from what the Englishman was admitted to, neither should he therefore be in South Africa, "if justice is of any value to the Colonists". But

> the 'justice and fairness' theory of which we have heard so much is one which, it appears, the white man in Natal has no intention of putting into practice when by so doing the black man will derive some small benefit.

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Those who take a narrow and selfish view of things have never yet been able to see the real beauties of such qualities as justice and fairness and we must not be surprised if the lofty and humanitarian sentiments which it is so easy, and often so convenient, for men *to give expression to*, are as often set aside and forgotten when they should be practised.[44]

3

In the first week of September information was cabled that "the Bill of the last session" which sought to disfranchise Asiatics as such was not "to receive the Royal assent".[45] This was followed by an article in *The Times* which said that it was "eminently a case for sensible conciliatory action on both sides". The Indian Government "may be forced to adopt measures to secure for Indians their full status as British subjects throughout the Empire".[46] *The Times* also wrote: "We can only deal with the Republics by diplomatic methods, but with two Colonies it is otherwise."[47]

The cabled news from London and *The Times*' remarks gave a rude shock to the Colonists. As a counterblast F. S. Tatham M.L.A. in an interview to a *Times*' representative laid the whole blame for the situation with which the Colony found itself faced on "the meddling interference of Downing Street in our government of the natives", which had prevented "our making use to its full extent of the labour which the native population ought to have been able to supply". This, he added, was all the more glaring in the face of the fact that "the Indian Government refuses to give these people the franchise even in their own country". If Indians were given equal franchise rights it would "necessarily imply government by the 'coolie'". The thing was impossible. "We won't stop to argue it. We are determined that it shall not be."

As for Mr Bale's proposal to give franchise right to some Indians who were fitted to exercise it,

> I think it ought to be withheld from the lot, though I am not disposed to go the length of striking off the voters' roll the names of those who are now there.

The Indians had been treated "with the greatest consideration and kindness" by the Government. Their disfranchisement was in the interest both of themselves and the "natives".

The most mischievous part of Mr Tatham's interview was that in which he tried to set by the ears Hindus and Muslims of the Colony who had hitherto lived in perfect harmony and peace. Behind the Indian agitation, he said, were only "Bombay traders called Arabs". Most of them were already on the rolls. Their object in raising the agitation was "simply to make use of the Indian vote, . . . for the purpose of themselves climbing to power". Those Indians on whose behalf

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the Bombay merchants are creating this agitation he concluded,

are Mahomedans. It is for the Hindus to consider whether, having regard to recent events in India, they are likely to receive from a Mahomedan Government greater consideration than they receive from the whites.[48]

In answer to *The Times* the *Natal Mercury* had written that the Colonial Office instead of enlightening the Colonies should set itself to the task of enlightening the Indians as to their duties when they came to the British colonies. The *Natal Advertiser* thought that the people at Home needed enlightening equally, if not more. They would understand the position, it observed, if, for instance, it was suggested to them "to make farm servants members of the House of Lords, or to include coachman and footman along with the duke and duchess in all social invitations". The Indians who came to South Africa "were not electors in India and would not have been had they remained". If by substituting an "illiterate clause" the desired object could be affected no objection could be raised against the suggested clause of the Bill.

But the Imperial Government must be given clearly to understand that the cardinal aim of the measure must not be tampered with; that, while the Colony does not seek to quarrel as to the details of how the end sought for is to be accomplished, it is firmly resolved that nothing shall be left undone to exclude Asiatics from the electorate.[49]

The *Natal Mercury*, while withholding its detailed comments till the full text of *The Times*' articles in question was available, wrote: "No doubt the Indian is a British subject. But there ought to be some distinction between British subjects of European descent and British subjects of Asiatic or African descent."[50]

At a meeting at Nottingham Road Mr Smythe, Member, Natal Assembly, remarked that it was a question that struck at the bottom of all their institutions. They were not prepared to admit the Asiatic to equal powers with themselves, and allow him a vote. They were a small community and did not want to be swamped by Indians and have the Colony turned into a dependency of India. As for Gandhiji,

No doubt that gentleman was an exception to the general run of the Indian population here, and, he (Smythe) had no doubt, would be quite qualified to give a fair and honest vote, but they could not legislate for one man.[51]

The *Natal Witness*, commending Mr Smythe's example who had set the ball rolling, thereupon wrote that such an open threat as *The Times* had held out should be "resented at once and resented in the only way in which the feeling of the Colony" could "be brought home to the Imperial Government, by meetings and resolutions and in every town and hamlet".[52]

It recalled the incident of the *Neptune*, when the British Government

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had proposed to deport a shipload of convicts to the Cape after the vent for the disposal of criminals by their transportation to Australia had been closed. This had raised such a storm of popular resentment that the Government had to bow before it and the *Neptune* had to sail off without landing its cargo of convicts. That should serve, remarked the *Witness*, as an example for Natal and a warning for Mr Chamberlain.

On the arrival in the Colony of the full text of *The Times* articles on the Chamberlain interview the *Natal Mercury* dealt with them in two successive issues. English journals were at the wrong end of the telescope, it wrote on September 25, 1895, to see this question in its proper light and at its full magnitude. As to Naoroji's contention in regard to the treatment towards Indians,

> an educated Parsee, or indeed a well-educated Indian of any sect would, we believe, resent a law that would practically mean placing the power of government in the hands of coolies of the lowest caste. . . . Were they all of the same stamp as Mr Gandhi or the better class traders, the feeling that is now so strong against the Indian franchise would never have arisen.[53]

The position about insanitation, the *Mercury* complained, had been misrepresented by the Deputation. The cleanly Hindu was only an exception to the rule—"a pigeon among the jays". He was "as typical of the average Indian we know as the English navvy is of the British peerage." A typical Indian in South Africa was a "coolie, pure and simple". The deputation had raised a false issue and created a wrong impression in the minds of outsiders in England and elsewhere.

> The coolie and the native are on a level in the scale of our civilisation, and therefore there is no injustice even from the British-subject point of view in putting them on a political equality.[54]

The *Natal Advertiser* found fault with the Imperial Government for regarding the subject entirely from "the theoretical and sentimental" point of view. The British subject theory, it was sure, would "quickly disappear from the mind of Mr Chamberlain", if the Indians went in their millions to seek settlement in the British Isles until the Indian population there became larger than the Anglo-Saxon. If the franchise was extended to Indians in Natal, in a few years this would result in their supplanting a European administration by one composed of Indians. Rather than submit to such a destiny, the Imperial Government would find that the peoples of South Africa would "band themselves together to prevent it".[55]

The *Natal Witness* was indignant because while Mr Chamberlain would take up no attitude other than one of remonstrance towards the Republic, it had been hinted that some "mild coercion" might have to be used in the case of the Colonies. This, the *Witness* surmised, would take the shape of "refusing something upon which either Colony may

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be bent". It would, for instance, be exerted in deciding to accede to any further increase of colonial territory. "Would annexation be worth the candle (*sic*) at the price of such a concession?" it asked.[56]

The *South Africa* referring to the Chamberlain interview in a satirical vein remarked:

> Last week we had a foretaste of the millenium—the Mussalman lion, the Hindu lamb and the Parsi leopard all lay at the feet of Mr Chamberlain, who played the part of the little child, and led them all by the nose.

To reconcile the contradiction between denial of a British subject's rights to Indians as members of the Empire and the duty of loyalty which Natal as a British Colony owed to the Empire, it argued that the Indian agitation in South Africa was "the thin end of the wedge—trying to gain the franchise of Indians in other British possessions, that it may be used as an argument for agitating for it in India itself". Finally, it was an attempt on the part of "Mr Dadabhai Naoroji and the amiable Hindu, Mussalman and Parsi gentlemen, his allies, to gain cheap political notoriety." The deputation would do well, it warned, to leave well alone "excessive agitation" in the matter; otherwise it might lead to results "very different from those which these gentlemen expect".[57]

4

To pressurise the Natal Ministry on the one hand and to strengthen its hands in dealing with Downing Street *vis-a-vis* the Asiatic question on the other, meetings were held at Nottingham Road (October 5), Howick (October 31), Stanger (November 9), Ladysmith (November 16), Bellair (November 25), Richmond (November 26 and 27) and Greytown (November 30) spread over the colony. Demagoguery indulged in diatribes against the Asiatic at these meetings, but they also served to highlight the fact that the despised "coolie Barrister", in less than a year of his settling in Natal, had become a factor to be reckoned with. They might admire or they might execrate him, but ignore him they could not. The transformation wrought by him in the political scene stared them in the face at every turn. Even those who were opposed to his political opinions appreciated his idealism and respected him as a worthy foeman, who had no axe to grind, and whose ability was excelled only by his gentlemanliness. Men with a conscience, for the first time informed of the rights and wrongs of the Indian question, as a result of his patient educative work, began to come forward and speak out their convictions, while the compulsion of circumstances created by his unwearying labours in the Colony and in England made many look for alternative solutions which they would have regarded as unthinkable before. As a Cape paper put it, the Asiatic had asserted himself in a manner no one had expected. Whereas it has seemed all

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smooth-sailing when the Indian Franchise Bill was first introduced now it was feared that the ship of the Ministry itself might founder on that rock.

At the Nottingham Road meeting, which was held under the auspices of the Nottingham Road Farmers' Association and was attended among others by Hon. Murry (Minister of Land and Works), Messrs C. A. S. Yonge, and C. J. Smythe M.L.A.'s, a message was read out by Mr Edward Way, exhorting the colonists to "make no compromise but absolutely refuse to let the coloured people have the suffrage, and we shall eventually tire England out". Mr Henwood also spoke in a similar vein. But Mr Henry Bale felt that "exceptions might, perhaps, be made in the case of a very few individuals under very special cases". Mr Smythe was applauded when he described the "class of Indians who came to this country" as "the scum of India, . . . natives . . . collected at the gaol doors and amongst the lowest castes of India". But the gathering felt a bit confused when, to work up their fears, a little later he went on to warn them that "the Indians . . . had plenty of brains and able and clever men to lead them". They would "combine . . . and exercise the power in a way we had wished to prevent them". Either the description or the bogey raised was false. The speech ended on a dismal note. The Bill passed the previous year could be held in abeyance till the next session only. But the Home Government had two years within which to assent or dissent to a new piece of legislation. The question they had to consider, therefore, was whether they should pass the Bill as it stood, "or repeat it with some coating of sugar or soft soap which would enable the Government to sanction it". The meeting adopted a resolution registering its "unqualified support of the Indian Franchise Bill now under consideration by the Secretary of State for the Colonies".[58]

The satisfaction of the Ministry over the resolution that was passed, however, proved to be short lived. The *Star* challenged Sir John Robinson, if he was not "the jelly-fish politician which nearly all who know him think him to be", to give Mr Chamberlain "convincing proof of the risks which he will run by trying to force on Natal a coolie vote".[59] The *Natal Witness* was frankly disappointed. The *Natal Advertiser* felt that to strengthen its position the Ministry was leading the Colony blindfold to a pre-appointed goal known only to itself. "The Franchise Bill was dead as Queen Anne when the session opened, but Ministers had strong personal reason for not letting it be known." The continued silence of the Ministry and its persistence in not taking the Colony into its confidence could only further damage its position. "If silence means consent they are themselves confirming the damaging reports that are abroad."

Mr Yonge supported the new Bill under consideration on the ground that the Bill passed in 1894 "tended to lower British prestige". This provoked the *Witness* to remark that the allusion to "British prestige"

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savoured "too much of provincial patriotism".[60] In its June number the *Ninteenth Century* had in an article pointed out that "patriotism for the Empire" was waning very fast but in each section of the Empire it was being replaced by a "local patriotism", not perhaps less strong than the old feeling, though of different character. "Let our local patriotism," the *Witness* urged, "be expanded so as to embrace all the States of South Africa as well as our own, and let us not magnify narrow local interests so that they come to fill the place of all larger and loftier politics."

It concluded with a warning:

> The maintenance of British prestige lost America, and today it is the British Indian subject, whom we wish to keep in his proper place, who is invoking it. It is the British prestige of fulfilling obligations which is troubling Mr Chamberlain and moving him to oppose as far as he may the wishes of British and Dutch subjects in Africa.[61]

But times' revenges were at hand. Soon the *Witness* and many of its fire-eating contemporaries were to show a complete change of attitude on the subject of the South African Confederation.

A columnist in *South Africa* wrote that Indians were all right as "hewers of wood and drawers of water". But to suppose that they should be placed on the same footing as the European was "to suppose an absurdity". If granted full citizenship rights the consequence to white supermacy would be disastrous.

The majority of the whites would not have any objection to the enfranchisement of the educated Indians, the writer went on to observe. It was also "very natural for Mr Gandhi to do his best for his fellow countrymen, and so long as his efforts are confined to the enfranchising of the better class Indian, he will meet with some sympathy". There were Indians and Indians.[62]

Differing from its own columnist *South Africa* observed that the boast of British citizenship was no doubt a proud one. But it would be inexpedient to grant the Indians equal citizenship rights since "the rights granted them in Natal, could hardly, with any show of justice, be taken away from them if they returned to India". The agitation on the part of the Indians in South Africa was not a spontaneous one but was the result of "the machinations of an agitating barrister". For reasons laid down by its Natal correspondent, no concession could be made in Natal, while the Imperial Government had no right to interfere in the internal affairs of the Transvaal. "It would, moreover, be the very height of folly to assert with regard to coolies in the Transvaal a doctrine which might prove one of the most useful weapons in driving us out of India."[63]

The Nottingham Road meeting did not awaken as much enthusiasm as was expected. "Mr Gandhi and the Indian Franchise question," it was complained, "were left pretty much in the same position they were in

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before the meeting."[64] Disgusted by the orgy of dirty-linen washing in public and lowering of public standards following the controversy over the Indian Franchise Bill, a European under the pen-name of "Civis Britanniarum Sum" felt impelled to register an indignant protest:

Now that there is a truce to the parochial outbursts, which have most certainly not tended to prove our fitness for responsible government, it is well to ask, What is all this agitation about? Have the majority of our legislators, the Press and the public been industriously shearing a pig?

Referring to the threats, overt and covert, to resist the authority of the Home Government, the writer went on to say:

Are such trivialities as these, coupled with insane attempts to alter the British Constitution, the sole outcome of responsible government? Does it not bring ridicule upon us to imagine for one moment that the fundamental principles of the whole British Empire are to be abrogated to meet exceptional conditions existent only in the smallest of her self-governing Colonies? No English statesman will ever be powerful enough to dare to sanction class legislation. Had we remained a Crown Colony it might have been possible, but not under responsible government. We must accept all the responsibilities, and not only such as appear to suit our ideas of government. There is an easy way of meeting the exceptional conditions and of preventing the Indian vote becoming a detrimental power in the land, without attempting the impossible task of inducing the Home Government to establish a precedent which would practically alter the Constitution of the whole Empire—establish an educational standard and raise the franchise by insisting upon a real estate qualification. *Believe me, the educated and property-holding Indian will be no bad addition to the voters' list; his interest will be identical with our own.*[65]

Soon the *Natal Mercury* was complaining that "a sense of unreality" had settled down on every public question. The Natalians were beginning to weary of what had become a game of seesaw between rival political factions. They wanted a respite from "current controversies". This, the *Mercury* felt, was a dangerous state of affairs which must inevitably weaken the Ministry.

Despite the flagellation the next meeting could not be held for four weeks. The virtuosos at Howick, taking up the symphony struck at Nottingham Road, duly endorsed the resolution passed there. Mr Yonge and Mr Smythe were the moving spirits there also. They maintained that "no person subject to special laws or tribunals was entitled to be on the voters' lists". Mr Henwood asked why the coronets could not be instructed by the Government to omit all Indians from the voters' roll.

The reason, Mr Yonge explained, was that in the last election the lower court's decision to remove some Indian names from the voters' list for the Klip Division had been reversed by the Supreme Court

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in appeal (See p 397). The point would, however, be settled by challenging the rolls at the Magistrate's court. He as an advocate placed his services at their disposal "gratis".[66] This offer provoked a correspondent scathingly to comment in the columns of the *Natal Advertiser*, that "gratuitous services" were "generally worth just what they cost".[67]

Both needed to be protected against themselves—was the verdict of the *South African Critic*, as the self-appointed champion of the Indians and the "natives". Pointing out the "shameful abuses" that had arisen in connection with the "blanket vote" in the Cape Colony, as a most telling example in South Africa itself on the "evil and danger" of wholesale admission of the coloured men to the electoral franchise it wrote:

> The Indians need to be protected as much as the 'natives' against the indiscriminate extension of the franchise privilege. Much more harm than benefit to the native races has accrued from that supposed privilege. It has made the native the tool of the political agitator. It has diverted missionary endeavours to the doubtful methods of the same class, especially in the Eastern Districts and so it has instead of affording the natives a means of self-protection against the rottenness of the liquor and other injurious traffics, directly contributed to their further degradation. I fear the same thing for the average immigrant Indian, if he be blessed in the same way, in Natal. . . . There is a false and a real protection of a tribe, or a people against itself. I should be the first to condemn anything savouring of the former. But outside the "Arab" section, albeit not entirely clean handed, I do not regard the Natal Indian as yet beyond the need of being protected against himself and the agitators who are busy persuading him that he is better than he is and is capable of political power.[68]

Taking stock of the protest meetings actually held in the Colony, the *Natal Advertiser* was depressed at the indifference on the vital Indian question exhibited in the parts hitherto regarded as the chief seats of political life in the Colony. The paper urged the colonists without loss of time to follow the good example set them by the electorates of Nottingham Road and Estcourt, to strengthen the hands of the Ministry in dealing firmly with the Home Government. The Indian question should be lifted above party politics.

> It is said there was once a period in Roman history when 'none were for a party, when all were for the State'; and in regard to this Indian question the time has undoubtedly arrived when the European of this Colony should sink all personal and political differences and work as one compact body for the general good.

If the party in power was disposed to tone down their sentiments and play fast and loose with the point at issue, then, the *Advertiser* warned, that "their downfall next session on this question . . . may be

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regarded as certain".

To meet the case of the "better class of Indians", the *Advertiser* proposed that an exemption clause, as in the case of "natives", should be introduced allowing a deserving Indian to be a voter, and the power of exemption should lie wholly with the Executive, this immunity to be extended to each case as a "purely personal privilege, retainable only during good conduct and liable to be withdrawn at any time for reasons deemed sufficient by the Executive". Such an arrangement would remove any injustice which the general law might inflict on any educated law-abiding Indian capable of exercising the franchise. A simple education test would not do: "An education test is sometimes mentioned as a preventive; but this barrier would be easily surmountable by a large section of Indians."[69]

Even this modest proposal proved too much for the Colonial mind. A wag from Lower Tugela tried in the *Natal Advertiser* to raise a laugh by suggesting that should the Indian voters be forced upon Natal, the early part of 1900 would "probably, nay undoubtedly, see us with a Ministry" composed "somewhat" after this fashion.

Prime Minister	—Ali Bangharee
Colonial Secretary	—Dost Mahomed
Attorney-General	—Said Mahomed
Treasurer	—Ramasamy
Secretary for Native Affairs	—Dhura Walla

In their Supreme Court and other courts they would have "Chief Justice Gandhi and the other long and white robed gentry, he is about to bring from India, and so on in all public departments."[70] This would make their position even worse than if they had remained a Crown Colony. For, in the latter event, though Parliament might be swamped by the Indian vote, yet the nationality of the personnel of the Ministry must have remained European.

> Why, a Kafir Ministry would be infinitely more preferable than an Indian. The native is a gentleman compared to him. He is manly, brave, and straightforward, while the Indian is otherwise.[71]

The writer then proceeded to justify civil disobedience against the Mother Country in this circumstance.

> Let us not either temporise or compromise with it. There is a good deal of nonsense talked about the patriotism we owe to the Mother Country. Just as there are times when children are justified in disobedience to their parents, as for instance, a parent ordering a child to commit suicide, so there are times when a Colony is justified and becomes the more patriotic in refusing obedience to the Mother Country when the latter becomes unjust, and attempts to inflict irreparable wrong upon it. It is the order of the

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wiseacres of our Mother Country that Natal should commit political suicide. Let Natalians then be up and doing, and, as one man, give an emphatic, unmistakable, and irrevocable 'No' to this unreasonable political parent of ours.[72]

Civil resistance was to be practised in South Africa before many years—not by the Colonists against the Mother Country but by the Indians against the Colonists.

A meeting of the Lower Tugela Association held at Stanger revealed a sharp division of opinion among the whites. While Mr A Colenbrander, speaking about the Indians, said he would not allow the vote "to even such a man as Mr Gandhi" and Hulett suggested that "the education and property qualifications should be made more difficult", Mr Hindson proposed that in view of the fact there was a large population of Indians unrepresented, a secretary of Indian affairs should be appointed to look after the interests of Indian British subjects. His position would be analogous to that of the Secretary of Native Affairs. "Such a representation would not give any political power to the Indians. The representative would be in a position to express his own views."

The meeting unanimously adopted a resolution asking the Government to introduce a Bill into Parliament preventing Indians who came to the Colony as indentured servants from exercising the franchise at any time but permitting any Indian British subject, who was "otherwise qualified under the electoral laws of the Colony", to become an elector on the production of a document certifying that he had been entitled to the franchise in India or any other British dependency.

Praising the meeting for its moderation, the *Natal Advertiser* wrote that it was only by discussing the subject in such a spirit that the Imperial Government could be brought to see that "the Colonists of Natal wish to do nothing in this matter but what is reasonable and right. The advocacy of extremists invariably does any cause more harm than good".[73]

It endorsed Mr Hindson's "fair-minded" proposal and recommended for "the better class Indians" a system of exemption for "such Indians as might be deserving of the privilege".

5

In this struggle the Indians were handicapped because the bulk of the immigrants were economically depressed. They had also to pay dearly for the inevitable demoralisation through foreign rule of a section of the Indian leadership. Sir Muncherji Bhownaggree, bullying and contemptuous towards his own people and cringing towards the members of the ruling race, had in one of his pre-election speeches—

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the sort of performance that had earned him from his pun-loving community the nickname "Bow-an'-agree"—said that the "natives of India" were demanding "impossible rights" and advocating advanced methods of Government "utterly unsuited to the conditions of India". Thereby they were straining the relations between British and other fellow subjects. Referring to it, the *Witness* commented, "Yet these people were demanding equal rights with the Europeans in Natal".

"I further assert," Bhownaggree was quoted as having said, "that all the causes that tended to make India turbulent in the old days exist in all their active influence today, and therefore it is imperatively necessary in the interests of India that British rule should be maintained and solidified." The *Witness* thereupon, applying those remarks to the part that Bhownaggree had played in the deputation to Chamberlain, observed: "What he (Bhownaggree) is now helping to attempt is subversion in time of rule by white men in Africa." Bhownaggree was further reported to have said in regard to the agitation in India that "to foster a spirit of discontentment and a habit of grumbling amongst the natives of India, to be on the alert to traduce the methods and motives of British rule, is a process which cannot but lead to the undermining of British influence". Alluding to it, the *Natal Witness* tartly asked, if all that could happen from voting power in India, what reason was there for supposing that "things would be otherwise in this country".[74]

At a meeting held under the Klip River Farmers' Association, it was resolved "to adopt every possible means to prevent any Indian whosoever exercising the franchise in this Colony of Natal". The Government was further requested "to order the compilers of voters' rolls to omit any Indian name in the future". The seconder of the resolution, going one better, urged that they should be prepared "if necessary to hoist the flag of independence to secure their rights". He had to be reminded by Mr Bainbridge, M.L.A., that the consideration under which self-government had been given was that they should not enter upon class legislation.

6

The Frankenstein threatened to get out of hand. Belatedly the *Natal Mercury* tried to call it back. While the resolution, passed at Ladysmith, certainly had the merit of being "thoroughgoing", it wrote, it was not such as could be endorsed in its entirety:

> There are Indians here, like Mr Gandhi, for instance, . . . who have come into the Colony to stay, and who are more capable than many Englishmen of exercising their vote in an intelligent and patriotic manner. They are practically naturalised Natal Colonists and there can be no more reason

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against their possessing the franchise than there would be against the Frenchmen and Germans who form a portion of this community.[75]

Giving every free Indian a vote was of course an absurdity as this would "swamp" the European votes. In the electoral division of Inanda in the Lower Tugela division and the County of Alexandra in the sugar growing coastal belt, the free Indians—excluding indentured labourers—preponderated, being in the proportion of one Indian to three and even to four Europeans. In the County of Victoria (in the Lower Tugela Division), for instance, there were 2,320 free Indians against 847 Europeans. In Alexandra County free Indians numbered 2,232 while there were only 541 Europeans. What the *Mercury* must have known or ought to have known, but did not state, was that in 1895 there was only one Indian voter in the Victoria County while 566 Europeans were on the roll. In Alexandra County there was not even a single Indian while 201 Europeans were competent to cast the ballot. The trick was turned by property qualification. The danger conjured up by it was therefore chimerical.

"A more intelligent class of men, chiefly store-keepers and their assistants, generically termed Indians," the *Mercury* admitted, were no doubt better qualified to exercise the franchise. But their interests were "largely opposed to those of the European Colonists, and *their numbers*" *were "sufficient by amalgamation, which is inevitable, to decide an election".*[76] It would be "natural" and "proper", therefore, that the country should seek to be protected against their vote.

Bellair was the constituency of Mr Stainbank, Speaker of the Natal Assembly. It was regarded as the "political centre" of Durban County. In the meeting held here Mr Stainbank, referring to the Bill that was going to be introduced next session, said that he hoped people in England anxious for federation would not adopt a course which would render federation in South Africa "an impossibility for generations".

But supposing Downing Street refused to deny franchise to Indians, he went on to ask, what would happen?

> The Government would say to Downing Street at once: 'We were entrusted with Responsible Government in Natal under certain circumstances. These have now become absolutely changed, brought about by your refusal to sanction our Bill. You have brought about a condition of things that is so fraught with danger that it is our clear duty to hand back to you the authority which you gave to us.'[77]

This made Mr Maydon, who was believed to be a close confidant of the Prime Minister, prick up his ears. From the rostrum he reassured the gathering, amid shouts of "hear, hear", that the Government had already considered that phase of the question and hastened to add:

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Further in handing back that power of self-government the Cabinet might conscientiously say: *We return our authority and intimate that no other five Europeans in the Colony will be found ready to sacrifice their consciences and to act as our successors in office.*[78]

Having thus bound the constituency, as it were, not to let the opposition get into the saddle in the event of the Ministry resigning, he proceeded to read out a letter from the Permanent Under Secretary to the Government in which the Prime Minister's reply of July 9 to Mr Tatham, respecting the New Franchise Bill was repeated. He made the following additional point in the course of his address.

(1) England was peopled 500 years ago by a race in advance of the Indians who lived in Natal at the present time (hear, hear). The Indian claimed the franchise simply because the sceptre of England had been wafted over India (applause).

(2) The records of their (Indians) country went to show that the Indian was not born to rule and govern. The record of their country from the earliest period of its history had been a record of servitude.

(3) The Indian Mutiny was the only time the Indians showed any degree of resistance.[79]

With a flourish of magnanimity, he professed that he had not the "slightest prejudice to any Indian individually", though "he would not feel highly flattered were he to occupy a seat on the same bench as Indians, even though they were of the highest caste".

* * *

Not to be baulked of an opportunity for peddling his patriotic ware, Mr Palmer felt that it was high time he also butted in. But ill-informed as ever, he again put his foot into it. In moving a resolution that it was "neither desirable nor expedient to extend the franchise to Indian residents or in this respect to grant them greater rights than they enjoyed in their native country", he, with more zeal than caution, allowed himself gratuitously to accuse "a certain gentleman . . . politically disappointed" with having got the "coolies on the roll with the intention of upsetting the present Government".[80] Unfortunately for himself the target of his insinuation, Harry Escombe, the Attorney-General, was now one of the pillars of the Robinsonean Ministry! For his *faux pas* Palmer was pilloried in the columns of the *Natal Witness*:

> Mr William Palmer seems to think that the contest is over a proposal to give the franchise to Indians, and that they have not got it now. Surely, Mr Palmer . . . should know . . . that the Hindoo is entitled to a vote on equal terms with himself. And he ought to be aware that the discontent has arisen because a bill has been introduced to disfranchise the Indian, which it is considered the Government is not pressing as it promised to do, and as it ought. Mr Palmer cannot be playing a practical joke upon the public.

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Then again, Mr Palmer stated that those who are discontended with the present Government had put the Indians on the roll to serve their own ends. Oh, Mr Palmer, Mr Palmer, you cannot be ignorant of the fact that there were Indians on the roll long before the granting of Responsible Government. Nor should you be unaware that the Indians on the Durban roll were principally put on at the instance of a member of the present Government, and a prominent one, during or previous to a contested election. And I think you must recollect how that distinguished Minister enthusiastically kissed an Indian baby during his canvass on the occasion. Do, do justice, to that clear memory of yours, Mr Palmer.[81]

Equally unsparing was "Inquirer" in the *Natal Advertiser*. Referring to Palmer's statement he wrote:

To say the Indians were put on by the opponents of the present Ministry to oust them from office is talking the purest nonsense. The Colonists who are not in touch with our present Ministry certainly have not shown themselves such crass idiots as to endeavour to put Indians on the voters' roll on purpose to wreck the Government. If the Government is wrecked, it will be the Ministry who will wreck themselves.[82]

Disowned by friend and opponent alike, including the Ministry, who were deeply embarrassed by his inept filibuster, Mr Palmer was left to stew in his juice.

7

Although Natal was originally an offshoot of the Cape Colony, the relations of the two were not, in the words of John Robinson, marked by "much filial regard or parental solicitude".[83] The very earliest settlers of Natal came from Cape Town or Port Elizabeth; its places of business were in the first instance established by Cape merchants; its first officials were likewise taken from the Cape service. Cape Colonists therefore took rather "a parental, if not a proprietorial", interest in the infant community and regarded with jealousy and distrust any indication on its part to escape from tutelage. They resented any attempt to compete with themselves. As Natal progressed towards maturity, it resisted more and more any interference, encroachment, or assumption on the part of the sister State.

Annexed to the Cape Colony in 1843, Natal was declared a separate Colony in 1856. But it was not till 1876 that the boundaries of the two actually became contiguous, save the territories between the rivers Umtata and Umzikulu, collectively known as Kaffraria, inhabited by Galeka, Fingo, Tembu, Pondo and other tribes. Adam Kok I, one of those European frontiersmen who went "native" and founded dynasties at the tip of the Dark Continent, (See p. 382), was chief of the Bastard

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tribe of Griquas. In 1858, at the invitation of Sir George Grey, the High Commissioner and Governor of the Cape Colony, he settled in the Western part of the sparsely populated and unclaimed territory of this region known as "No Man's Land". Natal acquiesced in this arrangement out of a desire to interpose a buffer between itself and the marauding Bushmen, who from the fastnesses of the Drakensburg made forays against the Natal settlers. In 1865, Natal was allowed, with the sanction of the Colonial Office, to annex a district roughly a million acres in area with about 25 miles of coast-line south of the Lower Umzikulu. Christened Alfred County, this was Natal's only territorial gain until 1897 when Zululand was annexed.

After the death of Adam Kok I, in 1876, the region occupied by him, known as Griqualand East, passed, to Natal's chagrin, into the hands of the Cape. Natal felt that the Cape had everywhere and always claimed a lion's share for itself whether in trade, exploitation of natural resources, Customs Union or territorial expansion. The frontier between the two colonies was nothing less than a "scandal". To reach Maritzburg from Alfred County, the traveller had to pass through a tongue of twenty miles of Cape territory that cut off one portion of Natal from the rest of the Colony. Contiguous with its northern border was Pondoland, which Natal had always coveted. But Natal had yet to be brought within the Customs Union. So important a diplomatic factor could not be thrown away. Rhodes was not the man to forgo his full price. He prevented it.

So long as Natal was a Crown Colony it was powerless to act. But after the first Responsible Ministry took office in Natal in October 1893, the clamour for the annexation of Pondoland was revived. Correspondence with the Home Government followed. The Colony was informed that the Imperial Government had admitted "the claim of the Cape Colony to the whole of Pondoland . . . years ago".[84]

Bitterly frustrated, Natal turned its eyes to the Crown Colony of Zululand on its northern border. The stars seemed propitious this time. The Imperial Government, it was rumoured, had agreed to Natal taking it over. The transfer was expected to be effected before the end of 1895. But again there was a fly in the ointment. The Imperial Government, it was whispered, had proposed a deal to the Colony. Natal would receive Zululand only on condition that they gave the Indians the franchise. Instead of bouquets the Ministry got only brickbats for all its pains.

Speaking at a public meeting at Richmond on November 26, Mr Baynes said that the offer of Zululand was intended as a "set off" against some "disgraceful surrender" on the franchise question, which called for "immediate and united action throughout the Colony" to prevent it, before they took over Zululand as "a sort of a mess of pottage in exchange for the birthright to govern themselves". Mr Bayne's

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tirade was received with loud applause.

Mr Nicholson, M.L.A., following Mr Baynes, thought that the reference to Zululand was a bogey. They were not going to be frightened into a surrender on the franchise question by this "bogey". It would be absurd to grant the franchise to the Indians while denying it to the natives. Self-preservation was the first law of nature.

Wherever natives had been given the franchise they had gone back to barbarism and even to cannibalism, and he did not know what would happen if either the native or Indian was given the franchise in this Colony.

Here the anti-Indian symphony broke into discord. Present at the meeting were Messrs E. Harrow, J. W. Mackenzie and R. A. Mackenzie—fearless champions of the coloured people's rights. Mr Harrow reminded the gathering that the Christian principle of doing unto others as you would be done by was not meant to be applied to the whites or Europeans only but to all irrespective of their colour or creed. Citing the example of New Zealand, where the burning question of the Maoris had been settled by giving them a representation of about half-a-dozen in the House, he said:

Let the Asiatics in the same way vote for one man, and if they put this man Gandhi in, they would have a superior man to anyone in the House. They would have a man educated in England . . . who had an intimate knowledge of Eastern affairs. He would soon be the Prime Minister (Applause and laughter). He was the sort of man they wanted here.[85]

Up rose Mr Alexander. Mr Gandhi was not the only man who had western education, he retorted, and the Maoris, whom Mr Harrow had cited, were the "most civilised" of what he might call "savage races" of the world, "points ahead of any savage race in civilisation". He spoke from facts, he concluded.

"And I speak from experience," Mr Harrow rejoined amid laughter.

Continuing, Mr Alexander lashed out at Mr Nicholson, who in the course of his speech had remarked that the Franchise Bill last year had been passed by the "unanimous vote" of the House.

There was no unanimous wish of the House. There was a lot of individuals in the House who voted blindly with the Government, and if Harry Escombe said a certain thing had to be done, it was done. (A voice 'Too true').[86]

Mr R. A. Mackenzie: "Can Mr Gandhi, who is qualified for a vote in England, be disqualified here?"

The Chairman: "That is a personal question which affects Mr Gandhi, and not us."

Mr P. Flett then moved and Mr Lewis seconded a resolution that the meeting viewed with "much dissatisfaction" and "strongly

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disapproved" any attempt to enfranchise the Asiatic in the Colony.

Mr Harrow proposed an amendment that the Asiatic be allowed "say two members" to represent them, but withdrew it in favour of J. W. Mackenzie's amendment approving of the coloured races having "a vote when they have an education and property qualification".

Speaking to the amendment, Mr Mackenzie remarked that the tendency had been to oppress the blacks for the benefit of the whites. (Shouts of "oh, oh," and "sit down".) He would not sit down, but intended to have his say, he retorted, and urged that the franchise ought to be given to those who had an educational as well as property qualification. "He did not think they should keep either the natives or the Indians out of the House, Mr Gandhi would be an ornament to the House. . . . It was an injustice that the coloured races had no representation. The tendency was to go in too much for class legislation; why did they not go in for slavery at once?"

At this point he, God's good man, in his excitement got mixed up. "What was goose for the gander was goose for the sauce," he spluttered, raising a titter of laughter, but managed to retrieve the situation by quickly adding: "That was the new version of an old proverb!"

On being put to the vote the amendment was lost by 3 ayes to 29 noes, the ayes being Messrs J. W. and R. A. Mackenzie and E. Harrow. Several present abstained from voting.[87]

Feeling that things had not gone altogether to their liking, nine European voters thereupon called another meeting at the Richmond Agricultural Hall the following day. Mr Harrow at this meeting moved that "The Indians be allowed two M.L.A.'s", but nobody seconded the resolution. Thereupon Mr J. W. Mackenzie proposed "that this meeting approves of the amendment: Coloured races having votes when they possess an educational and property qualification". In an even more outspoken speech than his previous day's, he said:

> The tendency at these meetings was to oppress the blacks for the benefit of the whites. . . . He did not think the kaffirs or coloured people were in a position to have the vote; but he did not see why they should keep people of education such as Mr Gandhi, and people with property, out of the House.

Mr Harrow seconded the amendment.

Mr P. Flett next moved and Mr Lewis seconded the following resolution: "The meeting views with much dissatisfaction any attempt to enfranchise the Asiatics in this Colony, and strongly approves of the Bill framed in 1894 to prevent Asiatics being placed on the Voters' Roll and requests the members for this division to do all in their power to give effect to the resolution."

The resolution was carried. But the result from the Europeans' point of view was even less satisfactory. Four voted for the amendment

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as against three in the previous meeting, the number of those for the motion remaining constant.[88]

The round of meetings that had opened with Nottingham Road came to a close with a small but stormy gathering on November 30, 1895, at Greytown where the Franchise Bill was upheld. *The Times* had spoken of British subjects having equal rights and equal privileges in all parts of Her Majesty's dominions. The gathering voiced the view that "it was all nonsense to talk in that manner, as the natives were British subjects, but they had no vote".[89]

At a general meeting of the Mooi Farmers' Association held at the Grandeigh Hotel, Mooi River, on December 12, 1895, Mr Richards, inveighing against the compromise proposal that Indians of a "superior class, such as Mr Gandhi", should be admitted to the franchise, said that

such men should be the very last to be put on the voters' roll, as they would do far more damage than 50 or 60 Sammys, who were working in the field.

Mr Carter caused a mild commotion by supporting a compromise proposal that the Indians should have two representatives in the Assembly. "If the Europeans limited the number to two no harm would be done. This would keep the Indians quiet and would satisfy the Home Government."

The Chairman also thought that the Indians must have some representation though they could be excluded from the general franchise.

Mr Richards: "Is the coolie to be represented by an Asiatic?"

Mr Woods: "Yes, if he prefers to elect one."

Ultimately, on the motion of Mr Richards a resolution on the lines of the one by Mr Hindson at Stanger was unanimously adopted, viz., the Indian should not be admitted to the general franchise but might be represented by "a Minister for Indian Affairs nominated in the same way as the Secretary for Native Affairs".

After this another round of public meetings was held throughout the Colony—at Mooi River (December 12, 95), Camperdown (January 3, 96), Boston (February 20, 96) and Klip River (March 7, 96).

The tone and tenor of speeches at these meetings was if possible even more venomous.

8

Whilst these meetings were being held, important correspondence was being exchanged between Pietermaritzburg and Downing Street from July. Leaks had however occurred, in spite of tight-lipped Ministerial silence at the Colonial Office end. These in their turn had set up ever widening ripples which at last reached Natal, where they gave rise to the suspicion that some kind of a deal was in progress behind

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their backs, to enable the Ministry to retain power. The significant shift, noticed of late, in the tone and postures of the Ministerial organ *vis-a-vis* the Indian question, and the increasing frequency with which "compromise proposals were being aired at meetings by Government's supporters, further lent colour to this suspicion. The suspicion, it turned out, was well founded.

Four days after the minute of the Prime Minister of Natal on the old Franchise Law Amendment Bill (See page 460), the Governor, on July 31, 1894, wrote to the Secretary of State:

In continuation of my dispatch No. 62 of 16th inst., I have the honour to forward a minute from Ministers transmitting a petition purporting to be signed by nearly 9,000 Indians, against the Franchise Amendment Bill. . . . It would appear that the bulk of the 9,000 signatures of the petition enclosed are those of persons who have no claim, under the existing law, to the franchise, and are not, therefore, affected by the measure to which the petition purports to object. . . . Even if the signatures are . . . to be accepted as those of the persons likely to be aggrieved by the proposed law, the petition is not one which I can recommend to Your Lordship's favourable consideration. The question at issue is really, whether Natal is to be governed in future, by persons of European descent, or whether persons of Asiatic descent are to be allowed a voice . . . in the Government of the Colony. Public opinion in Natal conceives that there is only one reply to that question, and that it can best be solved in that sense by the law to which the petitioners object.[90]

In the meantime Her Majesty's advisers having quitted office (See page 371) before any decision in respect of the franchise was taken, it was left to Lord Ripon's successor, Mr Chamberlain, to communicate to the Natal Ministry the views of Her Majesty's Government.

Secretary of State to Governor: *September* 12, 1895.

Your Ministers will not be unprepared to learn that a measure of this sweeping nature is regarded as open to the very gravest objection. It draws no distinction between aliens and subjects of Her Majesty or between the most ignorant and most enlightened of the natives of India. Among the latter class there are to be found gentlemen whose position and attainments fully qualify them for all the duties and privileges of citizenship and within the last few years the electors of important constituencies in this country have considered Indian gentlemen worthy not merely to exercise the franchise, but to represent them in the House of Commons. . . .

Lest it should be thought that he had decided the issue on the basis of conditions prevailing in England and not paid due regard to local considerations, the new Secretary of State went on to say:

It is manifestly the desire and intention of your Government that the destinies of the Colony of Natal shall continue to be shaped by the Anglo-Saxon race, and that responsibility of any preponderant influx of Asiatic

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voters should be averted. I readily appreciate the reasons for this policy, and I also recognise the fact that the natives of India do not possess representative institutions in their own country, and that they themselves, in those periods of their history when they were exempt from European influence, have never set up any such system among themselves; but the Bill under consideration involves, in common disability, all natives of India without exception and provides no machinery by which an Indian can free himself from this disability, whatever his intelligence, his education or his stake in the country, and to assent to this measure would be to put an affront upon the people of India such as no British Government could be party to. I trust that your Ministers may be able to devise a measure which will secure the essential objects that they have at heart in a manner which will render it possible for Her Majesty's Government to acquiesce in it.

The Prime Minister's minute to date October 18, 1896, read:

The desire and intention of this Government are correctly interpreted and fully appreciated by Mr Chamberlain in his despatch. . . . Ministers fully understand and recognise the difficulties . . . in so far as they can be met without sacrifice of the one end in view, viz., the exclusion from the franchise of persons unfitted for its privileges. Ministers have agreed upon the terms of a Bill in which they feel confident that it will be possible for Her Majesty's Government to acquiesce. The measure has been framed so as to avoid the objections raised by the Secretary of State, while it will protect the country from the vital danger which now menaces its political and social prospects. They also feel content that the Bill will be readily accepted by the Parliament.

There was, however, the Franchise Amendment Bill, that had been sent up for Royal Assent. It had to be got out of the way.

Attorney-General to Secretary of State: *October* 22, 1895.

It will, I think, be well to introduce a section to the following effect: 'Act No. 25, 1894, shall be and the same is hereby repealed'. The Act appears in the Statute Book as a complete measure. Its operative effect is postponed until the happening of an event which will not occur if the new Bill is made into law. I therefore think that the measure now in the Statute Book should be repealed.

The Governor to the Secretary of State: *October* 25, 1895.

The Prime Minister concurs with the Attorney-General.

The Secretary of State to the Governor: *November* 20, 1895.

I request that you will express to your Ministers my sense of the conciliatory spirit in which they have dealt with the representations which it was my duty to make to them on this subject. Should the Draft Bill now forwarded by you be passed by the Colonial Legislature in its present shape, I shall have no difficulty in advising Her Majesty to assent to it.[91]

The Colonists, however, did not know any of this. The dissatis-

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faction over the inaction of the Ministry and their unwillingness to take other parties into their confidence grew apace.

9

At St. Andrews Dinner on November 30, 1895, Sir John failed to make the declaration that everyone expected. He indulged in generalities.

> Natal is a country whose citizenship is free to all (voices: Not the coolies). Pardon me, gentlemen—Natal, I say, is a country whose citizenship is free to all who, by the experience in their native land, are fitted to exercise those privileges aright (hear, hear). With that one and indispensable condition, the laws of this land allow any man to claim the privileges of nationality without any abrogation on his part of his birthright.[92]

He concluded:

> Let me say this, that, so far as we are concerned, we mean that the Government of this Colony shall continue to be exercised by men sprung from European and Anglo-Saxon races (cheers). This is not a political occasion, and I must humbly beg pardon for this passing allusion to a political subject.[93]

Characterising the statement as "vague and diplomatic", the *Natal Advertiser* observed that Sir John had said that the Ministry was determined that the Colony should be ruled by those fitted for that task. Who were these people? "Will the Cabinet be persuaded by Mr Chamberlain that Indians came within that category?" it asked. "Will our acceptance of his doing so be deemed not too great a price to pay for Zululand?" It was clear, the *Advertiser* concluded, that the Ministry was using the Asiatic question "as a red herring to direct public opinion from the trails which have hitherto been run so vigorously."[94]

"Our Ministers would be hurt to their souls," remarked a columnist in another Natal paper, "were it said they were ready to do anything to retain their places. Yet their action renders them liable to the imputation and their absurd reticence invites it".[95]

The *Natal Witness* characterised Sir John's message, delivered by Mr Maydon at the Bellair meeting, as "a gauntlet" thrown to Mr Chamberlain "in very Bombastes fashion",[96] and his "oracular" utterances at St. Andrews banquet as "the last act in this . . . very funny and amusing drama".[97]

> Never was there a Government less disposed to fight any one; and whilst truculent messages are communicated in the Colony, the tone towards the Colonial Office in communications is even more than properly respectful. . . . Our (government) bids fair to be known hereafter as the Government of lost opportunities.[98]

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Bellicose messages "only imperfectly understood by the phonograph into which they are spoken" and "Delphic utterances" on occasions on which "flow of the soul is greater than the feast of reason", it wrote in the following week, would take them nowhere. They must take note of understandable difficulties of the Home Government and shape their demands accordingly.

Those who think that 'aye' or 'no' rests exclusively with Mr Chamberlain are greatly mistaken. The Colonial Secretary cannot move on this Indian question without consulting his colleague at the India Office and the Prime Minister. The former of the two represents the views of the Indian Government, which we know fairly well; but of the 'true inwardness' of Lord Salisbury's attitude towards India, and of the reason for his disinclination to sanction a clause disfranchising Asiatic *qua* Asiatics, no account has been taken.[99]

Lord Salisbury in his speech at the Guildhall was reported to have said that they had all their own beliefs but, governing a vast Empire like that they had under the Queen, they had "no other duty than that of absolute impartiality". It was the object of the Imperial Government to provide that "whilst observing each other's rights they may pursue their own industry and follow their own path of prosperity in confidence and peace". They were inclined to forget, the *Witness* told the Colonists, that the Queen's Mahomedan subjects far exceeded those of the Sultan of Turkey. "Rightly did Lord Beaconsfield say . . . that England is an Asiatic far more than a European power". They must bear in mind that Great Britain's "traditional policy" had become a check "and occasionally a severe one" upon action,

> and though the Colonies may sometimes fret under it a degree of submission to it is necessary. It will only be by recognising and making due allowance for the difficulties that beset them, that we shall gain English Ministers to our side.[100]

December was nearly half through. The time for the next election was fast approaching. If the Bill were not passed in the April-June session the Indians in the Colony would not be excluded from the voters' roll at the election. And yet the people knew nothing about the coming Bill. Cautiously the *Natal Mercury* began to prepare the ground for it.

To begin with, it took to task Mr Tatham for a tactless letter he had written to *The Times*, on the lines of his press interview, as a champion of White Natal. "Such letters may express exactly the feelings of Natal Colonists, but they are ill calculated to produce the desired effect in the meridian of London".[101] Next, it reminded the Colony that the English Government was bound "so far as may be possible" to allow Indians "equal rights with Englishmen in every portion of the

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Empire". Mr Chamberlain and a powerful section in England had planned investing millions of British money to develop the Crown colonies as field for trade. White labour, as distinct from White capital and superintendence, as everybody knew, could not be utilised in tropical British possessions. The only alternative to Indian immigration was labour from the islands of Sicily and Sardinia. So long as that source was not tried they would have to depend on India for their labour supply. Hence to English feeling nothing would be more objectionable than any proposal that would stop Indians from settling in Natal.

The educational test, the *Mercury* continued, would prove "utterly fallacious in practice". For proof they had a young Indian who had creditably passed" the examination only last week for the civil service. Then there were Natal's defence needs. They could not afford to cut themselves adrift from the Empire, and

> whilst Natal remains a member of it, we shall not be allowed to inflict disabilities upon fellow subjects on the ground of either race or religion. It is just possible that a side-wind may enable us to avoid conceding the franchise to the lower classes of Asiatics.

Instead of needlessly irritating public opinion at Home by "injudicious letters," the Ministerial organ suggested, they should try to discover some means of making the best of a necessary evil "which is yet counter-balanced by many advantages as far as the welfare of the Colony as a whole is concerned".

A series of articles appeared in the *Natal Witness* under the caption "Muzzling the Asiatic". They explored the possibility of a workable alternative to the disfranchisement of the Indians on racial grounds. The writer was an "eminent and much travelled constitutional lawyer". When New Zealand had admitted Maoris and Canada Red Indians to the full rights of citizenship, he pointed out, it was "hardly the time for Natal to attempt to disfranchise Asiatics by name".[102] But Natal had a perfect right to constitute the electoral bodies returning her Parliament on varying and not on identical basis, "so long as she does not forget the grand principle of the British Constitution that no British subject can be deprived of any right of citizenship, on the ground of race or religion".[103] The Colony could prevent itself from "being overwhelmed by Mr Gandhi and his colleagues" by resort either to the "Curia" system of representation by various categories of voters with weightage, incorporated by Count Beaust in the Austrian Constitution of 1867, or the system of Maori representation in New Zealand, where the proportion of representation to population was in 1893 one European member to every 9,603 persons and one Maori member to every 10,498 "natives", giving them in the House of Representatives 70 and 4 members respectively.[104] Gradually the *Natal Witness* began to veer round to the view that the "Curia" system on Austrian lines was the best way of minimizing "the

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evil" of the admission of the Asiatics to the franchise as against the proposal favoured by Messrs Bale, Hindson and Carter to admit an Indian Minister to the Cabinet, "which would mean permanently handing over one-sixth of the Natal Cabinet to the Indians".[105]

10

Gandhiji had been watching with increasing uneasiness the situation that was developing. The Natal whites were in an ugly mood. Sir John's St. Andrews Banquet speech, instead of assuaging their fears, had left them more dissatisfied and apprehensive than ever. Tatham had even tried to sow the seeds of conflict between the Hindus and Muslims, who had so far lived in perfect amity in the Colony. This was a dangerous game to play. The tiniest of sparks could in the circumstance set off a blaze with disastrous results. The only way to tackle it was to remove the groundless fear that had seized the Natal whites and was sedulously being worked up to fan their anti-Indian hysteria. Gandhiji took time by the forelock to nip the mischief in the bud. In his *An Appeal to Every Briton in South Africa*, citing facts and figures culled from official sources, he conclusively proved that as things stood there was not the slightest possibility of the Indian vote imperilling the white supremacy. Issued in the latter half of 1895, it cleared up, by a cold, critical examination of all the arguments that had been advanced either in the press or from the platform in favour of the Indian disfranchisement, the cobwebs of prejudice and misrepresentation that had in the course of the prolonged controversy gathered round and obscured the real issue. So effectively did he do his job that before long not only the opposition press but the Ministerial organ and even the Prime Minister were drawing upon it to shield themselves from criticism levelled by one against the other.

The principal objections of the Natal Whites were:

(1) The Indians did not enjoy the franchise in India.
(2) The Indian in South Africa represented the scum of India.
(3) The Indians did not understand what the franchise was.
(4) The Indian should not get the franchise because the Native, who was as much a British subject as the Indian, had none.
(5) The Indians should be disfranchised in the interests of the native population.
(6) The Colony was and must remain a white man's country and not a black man's; and the Indian franchise would simply swamp the European vote, and give the Indian political supremacy.

Taking first the argument that the Indian could not and must not claim higher privileges than he enjoyed in India Gandhiji pointed out that Indians as a matter of fact did have franchise in India. The

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position of the Legislative Councils in India "was not very unlike that of the late Legislative Council of Natal". And the Indians were not debarred from entering these Councils. They competed on the same terms with the Europeans.[106] The Government of India, however, not being of the same type as in Natal, there could be no analogy between the two. If the doctrine, that no man coming to Natal could get the franchise unless the franchise in the country he came from was the same as in Natal, were to be of universal application, then no one coming from England could get the franchise in Natal, for the Franchise Law there was not the same as in Natal, nor even some of the Europeans born in Natal, as Natal had no Parliament before 1893.

Indians had proved their fitness for equality with the Europeans as subjects of the British Empire by their devotion to the throne and their gallantry on the battlefield. Sir William Hunter, the writer of the "Indian Affairs" in *The Times*, referring to the Chitral Expedition, had testified that it was difficult to read "without a thrill of admiration" about the acts of daring and of the even more splendid examples of endurance of the Indians.[107]

The objection, that the Indian in South Africa represented "the lowest class Indian", was not true as regards the trading community, nor was it so as to all the indentured Indians, some of whom belonged to the highest castes in India. Besides, "if the Indian community in Natal is not, nor is the European community here drawn from the highest class". If Natal wanted a model Indian, it was the duty of the Government to help him to become one, not give the dog a bad name and hang him. "By persistent indifference, or retrogressive legislation, the Indian would be degraded lower still in the Colony, and thus may constitute a real danger which he was not before."

As for the third item, to say that the Indian did not understand the franchise was to ignore the whole history of India.

> Representation, in the truest sense of the term, the Indian has understood and appreciated from the earliest ages. . . . (It) has made him 'the most harmless and most docile man on earth'. . . . For, he knows no one can be in authority over him, unless he is tolerated there by a majority of the body to which he belongs. This principle is so ingrained in the Indian heart that even the most despotic princes of the Indian States feel that they are to rule for the people . . . even when nominally there is a monarchical government, the *Panchayat* is the supreme body. The actions of its members are regulated in accordance with the wish of the majority.[108]

With regard to the fourth objection Gandhiji wrote:

> Without entering into comparisons, I would beg to state what are hard facts. The native franchise is governed by a special law which has been in force for some years. That law does not apply to the Indian. It has not been

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contended that it should apply to the Indian. The Franchise (whatever it may be) of the Indian in India is not governed by a special law. It applies to all alike. The Indian has his Charter of Liberty, the Proclamation of 1858.[109]

The fifth objection, that Indian franchise would do harm to the "native", was presumably based on the alleged ground that the Indians supplied liquor to the natives and thereby spoilt them. Even if this was true, which Gandhiji stoutly denied, it was difficult to see how the Indian would supply more liquor to the "native" if he had franchise! Nor could the Indian vote be ever sufficiently powerful to affect the "native policy" of the Colony which was jealously watched and to a very great extent controlled by Downing Street. "Even the Europeans are powerless against Downing Street in this matter."

Further, by far the largest number of the Indian voters already on the list were traders, who were "not only teetotallers themselves, but would like to see liquor banished altogether from the land". The Indian Immigration Commission, 1885-1887, on pp. 42 and 43 of their report had stated:

. . . such criminal statistics as are forthcoming fail to convince us that drunkenness and crime resulting therefrom are prevalent amongst Indian Immigrants in a greater ratio than amongst other sections of the community, against whom no such restrictive legislation is proposed.

And again,

We . . . doubt that they are more guilty in this matter than the White people who traffic in liquor.

Not that he wished to excuse his countrymen, Gandhiji hastened to add. No one would regret more than he to see any Indian found drunk or supplying liquor to natives. His object was to show that the objection to the Indian vote on that particular ground was baseless and did not bear scrutiny. The boot in fact was on the other leg. The Commissioners in their report had observed:

It has been shrewdly observed that the people who make the loudest complaints against the Indian immigrants for selling or disposing of liquor to the natives are the very persons who themselves sell the liquor to natives. Their trade is interfered with and their profits are lessened by the competition of Indian liquor traffickers.

In 1893, there were 28 convictions against Europeans in the Borough for supplying liquor while there were only 3 against the Indians.

As for the deterioration of the natives, Superintendent Alexander had testified that, while the natives had gone down very much, the responsibility for it rested not on the Indians but on the Europeans.

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According to the Native Blue Book published by the Government, almost all the Magistrates were of opinion that "European influences have brought about a change for the worse in the moral character of the natives".[110]

Superintendent Alexander had before the Indian Immigration Commission further stated:

> I can deal with 3,000 Indians with the staff that I have, but if there were 3,000 corresponding White British workmen, I could not. . . . I find that people generally suspect coolies of doing everything wrong, stealing fowls etc., but I find such is not the case. Out of the last nine cases of fowl-stealing . . . I find that two natives and three White men have been convicted of stealing these fowls.[111]

In the face of these incontrovertible facts was it not unfair to impute the blame to the Indians entirely for the native deterioration? Gandhiji asked.

With regard to the last point, namely the colony being and remaining a White man's country, the obvious fact, as anybody could see, was that South Africa, and for that matter the whole of the Dark Continent, was a country of blackmen. As Anthony Trollope had pointed out (See p. 308), "It has been so, it is so, and it will be so". Usurpation by the Europeans of the African's heritage could last only just as long as there was no awakening among the indigenous inhabitants, not a day longer. Gandhiji, therefore, preferred to say nothing on a point that did not seem even to make sense. As for the Indian Franchise swamping the European vote and giving to the Indian the political supremacy in Natal, it seemed to be forgotten that property qualification was there.[112] The latest lists published in the *Gazette* showed that out of the total 9,560 voters only 251 were Indians. The voting strength of the Indians as against the Europeans was thus as 1:38. The Indian population as given in the *Report of the Protector of Indian Immigrants for 1895* totalled 46,343 out of which 30,303 were free Indians. With 5,000 traders and their assistants this made a grand total of 35,000 free and freed Indians as against some 50,000 Europeans. Out of these "more than half" were economically "only a stage higher" than the indentured Indians. They lived from hand to mouth and certainly had not immovable property worth £ 50. Free Indian adults in the Colony numbered only 12,360. The fears as to the Indians swamping the Europeans in the near future were thus "entirely groundless".

This was further borne out by an analysis of the Indian voters' list, which showed that out of 205, whom Gandhiji was able to get identified, only 35 had been at one time indentured Indians, and they had been in the Colony for over 15 years.

Most of these 35 freed Indians have risen to the status of traders. Of those who have originally come on their own means, a large majority have

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taken a long time to be able to get on the Voters' Roll. Of the 46 whom I have not been able to get identified, a great many, by their names, appear to belong to the trading class. There are many Colonial-born Indians in the Colony. They are also educated, and yet on the Voters' Roll there are only 9. This would show that they are too poor to have the sufficient qualifications. On the whole, therefore, it would seem that taking the present List as a basis, the fears as to the Indian vote assuming threatening proportions are imaginary. Of the 205, over 40 are either dead or have left the Colony.[113]

Occupationwise analysis of the Voters' Roll showed that the greater number of them (151 out of the total 205) belonged to the "trading" or the "Arab" class, who were admittedly "not quite unfit to vote". Under the second heading came "clerks and assistants" (50). They had received a tolerably good education. Those belonging to the third category, "gardeners and others", were "labourers of a higher order". Numbering fifty, they had settled in the Colony for over 20 years with their families and "either owned property or paid good rents". Most of these voters could read and write their own mother tongue. This again showed that there was no fear of the Voters' List being swamped by "undeserving" or "lowest-class" Indians.

The conclusion was clear. If the existing Voters' Roll could serve as a guide for the future, assuming that the franchise conditions remained the same, the list was very satisfactory from the European viewpoint, first because numerically the voting strength of the Indians was very poor, and secondly because more than three fourths of the Indians were traders whose number remained more or less constant. "While many come every month an equal number leaves for India. As a result the incoming ones take the place of the outgoing ones."

To this had to be added the difference in the natural proclivities of the Indians and Europeans respectively. By nature Indians were not inclined "to actively meddle" in politics. They had never tried to usurp power anywhere.

> Had not an attempt been made to tread upon their commercial pursuits, had not attempts been made and repeated to degrade them to the condition of pariahs of society, had not, in fact, an attempt been made to keep them for ever "hewers of wood and drawers of water", i.e., in a state of indenture or in one very much resembling it, there would have been no franchise agitation. . . . Leave them to follow their legitimate pursuits, do not attempt to degrade them, treat them with ordinary kindness and there would be no franchise question, simply because they would not even take the trouble to have their names on the Voters' Roll.

Tatham had remarked to *The Times'* representative that a few Indians craved political power and that these few were Mahomedan agitators. The Hindus should learn from past experience that the Mahomedan

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rule would be ruinous for them. Gandhiji observed that the first dictum was without foundation, and the second "most unfortunate and painful". To gain political power for the trader class was entirely impossible, if gaining political power meant entrance into the Legislative Assembly, because in the first place there were very few "wealthy", as distinguished from "well-to-do", Indians in the Colony, and secondly because there was perhaps none capable of discharging the duties of a legislator, "not because there is none capable of understanding politics, but because there is none possessing such a knowledge of the English language as would be expected of a legislator".

Tatham had tried barefacedly to play off Hindus against the Mahomedans in the Colony.

> How any responsible man in the Colony can wish for such a calamity is very wonderful. Such attempts have been attended by the most grievous results in India and have even threatened the permanence of British rule. To make them in this Colony where the two sects are living most amicably is, I venture to say, most mischievous.

As for the suggestion made at Stanger that those alone who could prove that they were voters in India should be entitled to it in Natal, Gandhiji said that the Indians would not object to it if it were applicable to all.

> I should not be surprised if the Europeans also were to find it difficult to get their names on the Voters' List in the Colony under such conditions. For how many Europeans are there in the Colony who were on the Voters' List in the States they have come from?[114]

Such a suggestion, if made in regard to the Europeans, would have aroused the greatest indignation. Why such a condition should be imposed only upon the Indians, he failed to understand.

The statement that Indians were agitating for "one man one vote", which would give the Indian voting preponderance over the European, lacked the slightest foundation and was calculated to create "unnecessary prejudice" against the Indian community. The existing qualifications were sufficient for quite a long time to come, if not for all time, to maintain the numerical superiority of the European vote. But if the European Colonists thought otherwise no Indian would take exception to "a reasonable and real educational qualification" and "larger property qualification" than the existing one.

> What the Indians do and would protest against is colour distinction—disqualification based on account of racial difference. The Indian subjects of Her Majesty have been most solemnly assured over and over again that no disqualifications or restrictions will be placed upon them because of their nationality or religion. And this assurance was given and has been repeated

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upon no sentimental grounds but on proof of merit . . . after it was ascertained beyond doubt that the Indians could be safely treated on a footing of equality, that they were most loyal to the throne and law-abiding, and that the British hold of India could be permanently maintained only upon those terms and no other.

True, there had been serious departures from the above assurance. But innumerable instances could be quoted in which the Proclamation of 1858 had been strictly acted upon "and is even at the present moment being acted upon in India and elsewhere". The exceptions only proved the rule.

Reiterating that the Indians would not think of objecting to any measure, with regard to the franchise, which might be advised "in order to keep the voters' roll clear of objectionable men", or "to provide against preponderance of the Indian vote in future", Gandhiji assured the Colonists:

> The object of every right-minded Indian is to fall in with the wishes of the European Colonists as far as possible. They would rather forgo a crumb from the loaf than have the whole in opposition to the European Colonists and from England. The object of this appeal is to beseech the legislators and the European Colonists to devise or countenance only such a measure, if one is necessary, that would be acceptable also to those affected by it.

By adducing copious extracts from the statements of Mr Saunders, a member of the late Honourable Assembly, Captain Graves, the late Protector of Immigrants, and the ex-Attorney General Sir Michael Gallaway, Chief Justice of the Colony, he showed that the best minds in the Colony were at one time not only not opposed to Indian franchise under proper safeguards but the idea of special exclusion was repugnant to them.[115]

The argument, that Indians should not be allowed to occupy a country which had been won by Euorpean blood and made what it was by European hands, was contrary to reason and justice. If the Indians were to be denied any privilege "because they had not shed their blood for this land", by the same token immigrants from England also had "no business to trespass upon the special preserve of the first white settlers". And surely, if the shedding of blood was any criterion of merit and if the British Colonists considered the other British dominions as portions of the British Empire, then Indians had shed their blood for Britain on more than one occasion.

The claim that the Colony had been made by European hands exclusively was set at naught by the testimony of Government reports that the Indian labour had been "the making of Natal". If the Indian was really the parasitical "intruder" who had made no contribution to the development of Natal's prosperity, that he was depicted to be, how

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was it that he was still wanted, so much so that the Protector's department was unable to cope with the demand for Indian labour? The best and the justest method, if his presence was harmful to the Colony, was to stop further immigration

and, in due course, the present Indian population will cease to trouble the Colony much. To have them under conditions that mean slavery is hardly fair.

The "British subject" idea had been repudiated by a section of the press as a "craze and a fad". Some had even suggested that the Colony should cut the painter, if membership of the British Empire involved conceding political equality to the hated Asiatic. Nobody seemed to have stopped to think that the status of the Indian as the citizen of the British Empire was fundamental to the whole Indian question. To ignore it was like enacting the play of Hamlet, with the Prince of Denmark left out.

Without it there would have been no franchise agitation whatever. Without it there would probably have been no State-aided immigration. Very probably the Indian would have been an impossibility in Natal if he were not a British subject. . . . The Indian is in South Africa because he is a British subject; he has to be tolerated whether one likes it or not.

Mr Maydon's statement that the Indians had "ever remained in a state of servitude" and were, therefore, unfit for self-government was historically untrue. Indian history did not date from the invasion of Alexander the Great, as Mr Maydon seemed to have presumed, and the Indian of Alexander's time was India on the decline.

(Yet) India of that date will compare very favourably with Europe of today. . . . When other nations were hardly formed, India was at its zenith, and the Indians of this age are descendants of that race. To say, therefore, that Indians have been ever under servitude is hardly correct.

True, India had not proved unconquerable. But if that was to be the reason for disfranchisement, then "every nation will, unfortunately, be found wanting in this respect". It was also true that "England wafts her sceptre over India". But the Indians were not ashamed of that:

They are proud to be under the British Crown, because they think that England will prove India's deliverer. The wonder of all wonders seems to be that the Indians, like the favoured nation of the Bible, are irrepressible in spite of centuries of oppression and bondage.

Prof. Seeley in his *Expansion of England* had advanced the view that India could hardly be said to have been conquered at all by the foreigners. She had "rather conquered herself".

The Honourable Mr Stainbank had at Bellaire said that the Home

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Government's refusal to sanction the Indian Franchise Bill had absolutely changed the conditions so that it had become the "clear duty" of the Colonists in the changed conditions to say to the British Government, "We hand back to you the authority you gave us". This, Gandhiji pointed out, assumed that the Home Government were now trying to thrust the Indian Franchise on the Colony, whereas the fact was that "the Responsible Government was trying to materially alter the circumstances which existed at the time it was granted". Would not, he asked, in the circumstances Downing Street be justified in saying :

> We entrusted you with Responsible Government under certain circumstances. These have now become absolutely changed, brought about by your Bill of last year. You have brought about a condition of things that is so fraught with danger to the whole British Constitution and British notion of justice that it is our clear duty not to allow you to trifle with the fundamental principles on which the British Constitution is based?

Mr Maydon's objection might have held if it had been raised when the Responsible Government was granted. It was, however, a question "whether Responsible Government would ever have been granted had the European Colonists insisted upon disfranchisement".

Indians no doubt had blemishes for which they themselves were to blame to some extent but the blame, Gandhiji contended, did not rest only on one side. *The Times*, "the soberest journal in the world", had testified to this. *The Star* of England, commenting upon the Indian Deputation to Mr Chamberlain in its issue of October 21, 1895, had admitted "the hateful persecution to which British Indian subjects are being subjected", as exemplified in the new Indian Immigration Law Amendment Bill, "which virtually proposes to reduce Indians to a state of slavery",

> Every Englishman is concerned to see that the commercial greed of the South African trader is not permitted to wreak such bitter injustice upon men who alike by Proclamation and by Statute are placed upon an equality with ourselves before the Law.

If only the Colonists could disabuse themselves of the smug belief that "the greatest kindness was shown to the Indians" and see that the Europeans were also to blame for the prevailing state, the whole Indian question perhaps could be solved, "without any intervention from Downing Street, to the satisfaction of both the parties".

Gandhiji appealed to the press, the public men and the clergy: no good could result from an attitude of hatred towards Indians.

> Such a policy is repugnant to the British Constitution and the British sense of justice and fair play, and (is) above all hateful to the spirit of Christianity which is professed by the objectors to the Indian Franchise.

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On the clergy, as the conscience of South Africa and the voice of Christianity, rested a special responsibility, viz., to stand by the Indians in their struggle to resist degradation. Many Europeans had privately expressed to him, Gandhiji said, their sympathy for the Indians and disapproved of the sweeping resolutions passed and the bitter tone of the speeches made at the various meetings. It was up to them, Gandhiji told them, to show the courage of their convictions and speak out. Theirs would be a fourfold reward. They would earn the gratitude of 40,000 Indians in the Colony, "and indeed of the whole of India"; they would render true service to the Colony by eradicating from the minds of the Europeans their irrational prejudice against the most useful section of the Natal population; they would serve humanity by helping to rescue "an ancient race from unwarranted persecution"; and last but not least, in common with the noblest Britons they would become the forgers of the links that would unite England and India in love and peace.

To separate the two communities is easy enough, to unite them by the 'silken cord' of love is equally difficult. But, then, everything that is worth having is also worth a great deal of trouble.[116]

11

Gandhiji's *Appeal to Every Briton in South Africa* was eulogised by the *Natal Mercury* for its "great merit of moderation".[117] The *Bechuanaland News* described it as a "well written appeal" in which the author had made "the most of his case".[118] Neither of them of course accepted his thesis but their criticism was weak and halting. The *Pilgrim*, on the other hand, unequivocally declared that to debar from the enjoyment of rights of citizenship and to treat "practically as a pariah" a man who had qualified himself for it, in spite of his adverse circumstances, was neither in consonance with the principle of justice nor of public policy. Was the hard-working, honest Indian, if he brought up his family well and educated them to the best of his ability, to be despised "because, foresooth, he came to this Colony under lowly or even servile conditions", and were his children to have "the finger of scorn pointed at them on account of their colour or because their father had been an indentured coolie?" it asked.

The answer was an emphatic "No".

Recalling that Horace, the celebrated Roman poet, was the son of a freed slave who had educated him; that the greatest of the Roman Emperors did not despise the "son of a freed man"; and that Maecenas, "for two thousand years the apotheosis of struggling genius", paid no heed to an ignoble pedigree when he made Horace his bosom friend, the *Pilgrim* lashed out against those whites who wished to keep out of the electoral privileges the children of free Indians or of indentured

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parents, on account of their birth.

The respectable and intelligent Indian, who, in a manner that is in every way creditable to him, saves money and makes such a position as gives him an undoubted stake in the Colony, may be an object of envy to less deserving Europeans; but we fail to see why he should be debarred from the enjoyment of rights of citizenship. . . . We unhesitatingly say that once the barriers of restrictiveness are creditably surmounted and the position of qualification attained, the Indian's position of citizenship ought to be unquestioningly recognised regardless of colour or caste. . . . To refuse to give merit where merit is due, would be alike unjust, ungenerous, and diametrically opposed to the essential principle of the British Constitution whose protective aegis is extended over all who may desire and value British citizenship.[119]

The bogey, that the Indian vote could become an "element inimical to European interests or the interests of the Colony", made such a big draft on credulity, the *Pilgrim* went on to observe, that it was "not worthy of being seriously considered". In the generality of cases Indians had been brought to Natal under circumstances not altogether dissimilar to taking men and boys under articles on board ship. On the expiry of these articles, the signatories reverted to their original status. In the case of a free Indian the status was that of a free subject of the Crown. To refuse to recognise that status or withhold, or "even curtail the privileges that pertained to it" would be "to ignore a cardinal doctrine of the British Constitution" which, in the words of a distinguished orator, was even applicable to "the stranger and sojourner".

The moment he (i.e. the stranger and sojourner) sets his foot upon British earth, he feels that the ground on which he treads is holy. No matter in what language his doom may have been pronounced; no matter what complexion incompatible with freedom an Indian or an African sun may have burnt upon him; no matter in what disastrous battle-field his liberty may have been cloven down; no matter with what solemnities he may have been devoted upon the altar of slavery; the first moment he touches the sacred soil of Britain, the altar and the god sink together in the dust; his soul walks abroad in her own majesty; his body swells beyond the measure of the chains that burst from around him; and he stands redeemed, regenerated and disenthralled by the irresistible Genius of *Universal Emancipation*.[120]

This was the "sublime" principle of the British Constitution, the *Pilgrim* concluded, which the respectable Indian in Natal could invoke with confidence in claiming simple justice and asserting a free-born British subject's inalienable rights.[121]

In London the "Appeal", by a delayed action effect, tipped the balance of enlightened British public opinion completely in favour of the Indian viewpoint. *The Times* had hitherto kept its judgment on

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the question of the Indian franchise in suspense. When some time back a protest had been received from the Colonists against the grant of the franchise to the Indians on the score that the white vote would be swamped, it had described it as "difficult to resist if based upon the facts". On January 27, 1896, commenting on the facts and figures culled from the official sources by "Mr Gandhi, whose efforts on behalf of his fellow-Indian subjects in South Africa entitle him to respect," it wrote : "Does it seem possible that the Indian vote can swamp the European vote at any period within the range of practical politics?" Only 2 out of 251 voters appeared as labourers and more than a half of the 251 British Indian voters were referred to as "merchants, storekeepers, goldsmiths and jewellers". It was precisely this class of men, *The Times* pointed out, who formed "the most valued element" in the municipal and other electorates in India.

The argument that the Indian in Natal could not claim higher privileges than he enjoyed in India, and that he had no franchise whatever in India, was inconsistent with the facts.

> The Indian has precisely the same franchise in India which the Englishman enjoys. Throughout the 750 municipalities of India the British and the native voters have equal rights and 6,790 municipal commissioners in 1891 were "natives" as against 839 Europeans. The European vote on the Indian municipal boards was therefore only one to eight Indian votes, while in the Natal electorate there are 37 European votes to one British Indian. . . . What the British Indians in South Africa demand is that they shall not by a change in the law be excluded from the vote altogether. It must be remembered that the Indian municipalities administer a population of 15 millions and an expenditure of 50 million rupees. The total population of Natal was estimated in 1891 at half a million of whom only 88,000 were Europeans or British Indians (say now, 100,000). Its public expenditure in 1893-94 was one million sterling.[122]

Equally baseless was the plea that the British Indian was unacquainted with the nature and responsibilities of representative government:

> *There is probably no other country in the world in which representative institutions have penetrated so deeply into the life of the people.* Every caste, every trade, every village in India had for ages its council of Five, which practically legislated for and conducted the administration of the little community which it represented. Until the introduction of the Parish Councils Act last year there was no such rural system of self-administration even in England.[123]

The question before Mr Chamberlain was not an academic one, *The Times* warned, but one of race feeling:

> *We cannot afford a war of races among our own subjects.* It would be as wrong for the Government of India to suddenly arrest the development of Natal by

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shutting off the supply of immigrants as it would be for Natal to deny the rights of citizenship to British Indian subjects who, by years of thrift and good work in the Colony, have raised themselves to the actual status of citizens. *The Indian Government have on occasion found extreme measures the only way of dealing with certain foreign colonies. It is the duty of the Home Government to take care that that necessity shall not arise in regard to any Colony of British men. . . .* [124]

The Times' verdict, with its significant warning, delivered a rude shock to the Colony. The *Natal Witness* raised the alarm that while the Colony had been slumbering "Mr Gandhi and his supporters in England" had stolen the march over them. The *Daily News*, which had hitherto taken no notice of the Indian question, warned that the assumption "shared alike by the Home Government and the Natal Ministry, that if there were danger of the Indians outnumbering the whites, then there ought to be no franchise", provided a full justification to the Boers in their resistance to the Uitlanders' claims.

President Kruger must chuckle grimly when he reads or hears this interesting admission. For, of course, it completely gives away the whole case for the Uitlanders in the Transvaal. Nobody doubts that they are far more numerous than the Boers, and indeed that is the very ground upon which their claim is based. So then it comes to this, that Englishmen are to have the complete suffrage in the Transvaal because they can outvote the Boers, and that the Indians may keep their suffrage in Natal because they will always be outvoted by the English.[125]

The problem before the Natal and Transvaal Governments, the *Witness* commented, being basically identical, disfranchisement of the Indians in Natal was bound to work to the disadvantage of the European Uitlanders' claim. The sooner, therefore, those, who wanted to refuse the vote to the Asiatic *qua* Asiatic, abandoned that idea and realised that they would not be allowed to make a "political departure which would be diametrically opposed to all established principle and precedent throughout the Empire, . . . the more likely will be the chance of arriving at a satisfactory solution."[126]

Other portents, too, pointed in the same direction. Lord Lansdowne in his speech at the Chelsea Polytechnic, delivered three days previous to *The Times* article of January 27, was reported to have said that the aim of the India Government had been "cautiously and tentatively . . . to give to the people of India a large interest and share in the management of their own affairs". This system far from embarrassing British authority in India had "in many ways assisted those who were responsible for the conduct of public affairs in India". Read side by side the two left no doubt, the *Witness* warned, that coolie immigration to this Colony would be stopped by the Indian Govern-

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ment, if necessary. "Both must be taken as a very serious warning to the Natal Ministry to come to some compromise". Emigration had become absolutely necessary for the relief of many congested parts of India, for the development of East Africa, and of the Malay Peninsula, "to get possession of the whole of which Great Britain had made large sacrifices to France in Indo-China, and of several of the Crown Colonies". It was, therefore, most improbable that Mr Chamberlain would commit "the illegal act of flying in the face of the 1858 Proclamation" merely because it was "barely possible that this Government may be technically within the rights in refusing to be bound by it". The Colonists could neglect to take note of these signs of the time only at their peril.

12

The Jameson Raid at the close of 1895 completely shattered many a long-cherished illusion of the South African whites and created a strong sentiment in favour of all parties closing their ranks. "No one can more fully recognise the importance to the Colony of the Asiatic franchise question," wrote a contemporary in the second week of January 1896, appealing to the working men's party's journal to sink all differences,

> but, as Shakespeare has said, 'our bones were made in England', and we cannot without concern contemplate the raising of a constitutional question as to the rights of a self-governing Colony in face of the admitted obligations of the Imperial Government towards another portion of the Queen's dominions which might give rise to a constitutional struggle as dangerous as that which caused Great Britain to lose the United States.[127]

The *Witness* had all along strenuously opposed any admission of the Indians to the franchise on the ground that this would jeopardise the formation of a Confederation of South African States. The fact of the matter, as "Muzzler" had shown in his series of articles, however, was that Natal would have been placed at an extreme disadvantage in any future Confederation of South Africa if the number of its white population alone were reckoned in determining its representation in a Federal Parliament. By admitting qualified Indian fellow-citizens to the franchise under the restrictions, Natal stood to gain a positive advantage in negotiations for confederation based on the number of "active" or voting citizens per State. For instance, the Southern States of America had maintained their supremacy over the Northern States from 1776 to 1860 "solely because two white voters in those States were, in calculating their representation in Congress, allowed to reckon as five in reason of their slave population".[128] What the "Muzzler's" argument had, however, failed to accomplish was accomplished in a surprising manner by the

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logic of events. Under the growing pressure of realities the *Witness* at last capitulated. On January 17, 1896, it wrote:

We are very far from being enamoured of the Asiatic voter, but we prefer his presence in a mitigated and controllable form to a conflict with the Home Government on a most delicate and dangerous constitutional point, on which English feeling would be most decidedly against us, and in which the rights of the case are, in the opinion of not a very few sound lawyers, exceedingly doubtful. An independent South Africa may be an ideal, but the events of the last few days have rendered it, for a still further stretch of time, absolutely impracticable. Consequently the connection with the Home Government must be maintained. . . . We believe a compromise on the franchise question to be not only possible, but the only satisfactory solution of the difficulties with which it is surrounded.[129]

In the following weeks its sentiment on the issue of the South African Federation hardened still further with a corresponding change in its attitude on the question of the Indian Franchise. News kept appearing in the British press that most of the Cornish miners on the Rand, on whose armed assistance the Reform Committee had evidently based their hopes, were the constituency of C.V.A. Conybeare, M.P., the founder of the Oceana Company and Socialist Representative for more than ten years of the Camborne Division of Cornwall, and they had shown little enthusiasm in any undertakings against the South African Republic which they regarded "as undertaken by capitalists in their own interests".[130] The failure of the Jameson Raid was attributed to the failure of Uitlander leaders to forestall and take into account the attitude of the Trade Unions on the Rand. It was further prognosticated in a series of articles in the *African Critic*, the *Sunday Times* and the *Observer* that Johannesburg, very probably within the next few years, would become "one of the most active centres of militant socialism in the world". The *Witness* began to oppose the formation of a Federation of South African States as uncompromisingly as it had formerly supported it. The admission of the Indians to a limited franchise, it started saying, should be "welcomed" as a bulwark against the onset of Socialism.

It is very inconsistent to be always railing at the Boers for refusing the franchise to men whom they have every reason to believe to be opposed to the continued existence of their country, as a Dutch Republic, and, at the same time, to refuse moderate concessions, such as can be granted without the smallest danger to men who, at all events, have been in many ways very useful to the Colony, and who cannot be accused of, and, in any case, would be unable to carry out, the smallest designs against its liberties and civilisation. . . . Recent events in the Transvaal teach, indeed, if our reading of them from this point of view be right, that a *Confederation of South Africa would*

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be fraught with the gravest dangers to society as at present constituted. It would be difficult to imagine the furious party strifes which would rage in a Confederation Parliament between capital and labour, between rights of property as represented by the De Beers' compound system, backed up out of sheer ignorance by the Conservatism of the Dutch farming element in the Old Colony and the Republics, and the Socialism of the Rand agitators, supported as it would have to be by all the free commercial interests of South Africa, in order to protect themselves against the attacks of monopolists of the worst sort.

As things stand, *Confederation with its monopolies, its cheap brandy, and its dear bread, would be a curse of the worst kind to our Natal Colony* . . . by joining in a South African Confederation, we became involved in party fights which would shake every foundation on which the social system rests.[131]

Nor was this the worst to be feared.

The black man would see his chance when the white man fell out, and a rising of all the black races south of the Zambesi would, probably, coincide with any Socialistic risings at Bulawayo or on the Rand. *The admission of qualified Asiatics and natives to a modified franchise in Natal would have, at all events, one good result. It would form an almost insuperable barrier to the realisation of that South African Confederation, the dream of which has done more harm to South Africa since 1877 than almost any cause which can be named.* Majuba was the fruit of Lord Carnarvon's Bill, and Krugersdorp and its consequences are the direct fruit of Majuba, and of these consequences not the least are the revelations which have been made as to the feelings which exist between capital and labour at the Rand. Had the Uitlanders been but united amongst themselves, the Boer oligarchy must have assented to the terms which had already been conceded by President Kruger to Mr Chamberlain, and which included all the Uitlanders' demands. They were not united, and not only was their social position rendered worse for the next 20 years, but it was seen that the labour wars of Europe had broken out in South Africa. *South African Confederation might possibly have answered 20 years ago; it would be a curse to Natal today.*[132]

A compromise had been proposed after the Raid to President Kruger by one Mr Brown for the admission of Uitlanders to the franchise "without prejudice to the independence of the South African Republic". This solution, the *Witness* pleaded, could with the change of a very few details meet the case of the Natal Asiatics, "whether it was measured by the intelligence of the average Asiatic claimant of the franchise, or by the amount that he or his fellow countrymen contribute to the Natal treasury".

"Indeed, . . . for intelligence and integrity," the *Witness* asserted, "Mr Gandhi . . . would rank far higher than Messrs Kok and Wo'marans or even than Mr Lippert (the concession hunter) of Pretoria".[133]

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The wheel had turned full circle. Complete was the *volte face* by the working men's party's journal on a total exclusion from the franchise of the "Asiatic". The ground was ready for a solution of the Indian question on a basis other than the purely racial on which the Franchise Amendment Bill of 1894 was framed.

The quarrel between the Ministerialists and the opposition continued. But what divided them was only the difference between Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee.

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CHAPTER XXI

A PYRRHIC VICTORY

1

EXCEEDINGLY SHORT, the new Franchise Bill, gazetted on March 3, 1896, consisted of only 3 clauses. Clause 1 repealed the Act 25 of 1894. As the *Natal Advertiser* bluntly put it, this was being done "to get the unacceptable Bill out of the way rather than it should be stamped with a veto from the Crown". Clause 2 provided that no persons shall be entitled to franchise in Natal, who "not being of European origin" were "natives or *descendants in the male line of natives of countries which have not hitherto possessed elective representative institutions*, unless they shall first obtain an order from the Governor in Council exempting them from the operation of this Act" (Italics mine). Clause 3 saved the franchise right to those who were mentioned in section 2 but whose names were "rightly contained" in any voters' roll in force at the date of the promulgation of the new Act, and who were "otherwise competent and qualified as electors". In effect this meant that the names of the Indians already on the franchise roll would remain unaffected, the Act 25 of 1894 by which Asiatics were excluded *eo nomine*, would be repealed, and in its place a measure substituted which would bar persons other than those of European origin from the acquirement of the franchise.

An attempt to "hoodwink" the public was the comment of the *Natal Witness*. Mr Chamberlain had saved the face of the rulers of that Colony. The Act being cast into the waste paper basket had the merit of refusing point blank vote to the Asiatic *qua* Asiatic. It called a spade a spade. The Asiatic now disappeared in the new Bill, and he was merged with "Polynesians, Patagonians, and other races who are not in the enjoyment of representative institutions";[1] the spade was not called a spade. The substitution of the periphrases "natives or descendants in the male line of natives of countries which have not hitherto possessed elective representative institutions" in the new Bill had, however, come "too late in the day to serve as a blind".[2] The expression "representative institutions" was a very wide one. The Bill had left undefined the nature of the representative institutions which a country must have to admit of a person born in it obtaining the franchise in the Colony. Lord Lansdowne had clearly said that the people of India had "a voice in the Legislative Councils of the great provinces, and even in the Councils of the Indian Empire".[3] The Indians had claimed that

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they had elective representative institutions in their country. There was no court of law, the *Witness* asserted, that would "not sustain a claim to be admitted to the franchise if the Bill passes".[4]

The Bill, further, was not an honest one. Its object was to impress the Colony with the belief that it would exclude British subjects of Asiatic birth, but it would do nothing of the kind. "Unless the wording of the Bill is materially altered . . . the Asiatic with the requisite qualification will be able to obtain the franchise as easily as now."[5] Instead of excluding "the coolie or black man" from the franchise the Bill conferred the power on the Governor with the advice of his Executive to grant the franchise to anyone they might select.

A more unconstitutional proceeding was never dreamt of than to give the power of conferring the franchise on the Ministry of the day. It would open the door to wholesale corruption. . . . Representative Government becomes a ridiculous farce if Ministers can tamper with the electoral rolls.[6]

If it was a sop thrown out to Indians, a "direct inducement to Mr Gandhi and prominent Indians to abandon their agitation", the *Witness* was sure that they would not be tempted by it. "We do them the justice of believing that they would accept the franchise on no other ground than that of such eligibility as is now required by law, and not as Governor's or Ministerial nominees".[7]

Why should such a Bill have been framed at all? Answering its own question the *Witness* suggested that there was something behind the scenes with which the Colony had not been made acquainted. The Assembly should, therefore, before proceeding with the second reading insist on having the correspondence with the Imperial Government laid on the table and also make sure that "they get the whole".[8] In view of the persistent rumour that Natal's annexation of Zululand had been made conditional on granting of franchise to the Asiatic, they should ask for correspondence relating to the transfer of Zululand also, so that they might be sure that in its acquisition they had not been "sold".[9]

The *Times of Natal* was afraid that under clause 2 in the new Bill applications for exemptions would be immediately made to the Governor in Council. This would have the sympathy of all the Indian population, and the active support of "the strong organisation at the head of which stands the capable, energetic and ambitious Indian, Mr Gandhi".[10] With the Ministry they had in power, orders for exemption would not be difficult to obtain. They had, therefore, every need to be cautious. "If a slip is made, if a loophole is left for Indians to get a direct voice in our political system, Natal will be doomed at an early date to become a wholly black colony."[11]

While ostensibly the Act gave all that was demanded, the *Natal Advertiser* commented, the provision in the second Clause made it "possible to render the prohibition nugatory".[12] The Indian view that

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the system of Municipal Government in vogue in India amounted to an elective representation under the meaning of the Proclamation of 1858 had found considerable support in London. "It, therefore, follows that passing the proposed Bill would by no means end the controversy. . . . In all probability an appeal to the Privy Council would follow the exclusion of Indians from the rolls under its provision".[13] Far from excluding, the new Bill thus practically opened "two doors instead of one",[14] to the Indian in Natal by which he could gain admission. He could come in if he could prove that India was a country possessed of "elective representative institutions". If, on the other hand, he failed in this, he could apply to the Governor in Council for enabling him to become an elector. "As far as we can see there will not be the slightest difficulty on the part of the Indians to prove that they come from a country possessed of 'elective representative institutions'. We cannot tell whether this phrase has been purposely rendered as ambiguous as possible, the fact, however, is that it could not be much less definite."[15]

Since the Bill was the result of protracted negotiations between the Natal Ministry and the Home Government, the *Natal Advertiser* suggested that the only way to resolve the ambiguities was to find out, what the intention of the Home Government was. If that Government absolutely insisted on the Indians having a vote as an inalienable right, it was useless for the Colony to pass disfranchisement Bills because they would not obtain the sanction required. If on the other hand, the correspondence indicated only a strong suggestion there was still room for action.[16] Unless the whole correspondence on the Franchise question was made available before proceeding with the Indian Bill, it warned, "the Parliament will be voting in the dark".[17]

G. W. W., writing in the columns of the *Natal Witness*, characterised the measure as "either a conundrum or a complete surrender and of very doubtful meaning or use".[18]

The Indian reaction to the Bill was contained in two letters addressed by Gandhiji separately to Dadabhai Naoroji and Sir Wedderburn.

> It is said that this Bill has been approved of by Mr Chamberlain. If so it would place the Indian community in a very awkward position. The newspapers seem to think that India has representative institutions and that therefore the Bill will not affect the Indians. At the same time there can be no doubt that the Bill is meant to affect the Indian community. It is our intention to oppose the Bill. But in the meantime a question in the House of Commons, in my humble opinion, may be very useful and give an insight into Mr Chamberlain's views.[19]

Condemned alike by the Colonists and the Indians, the Bill was accorded wholehearted support by the Ministerial organ. "Much as many of them might have liked to have the Act of 1894 finally sanctioned," the *Natal Mercury* wrote on March 5, there was no getting

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away from the fact that the Colony was subject to the Imperial Government, and that the Imperial Government were bound by the Royal Proclamation of 1858, which gave the full rights of British subjects to the Indians. The section in the Act of 1894 declaring that the Act "shall not come into operation until Her Majesty's assent be given" did not appear in the new Bill. It was a question whether such representative institutions as obtained in India would be held to be "elective representative institutions" within the meaning of the Bill, "and this might be a question for the Supreme Court of the Colony to determine, if it was not specially made clear by some means or other before the passing of the Bill". Assuming, however, tha t Indians were held as coming from a country possessing elective representative institutions, the *Mercury* still did not consider any danger of Indians swamping at all likely. This had been proved by past experience.

> The class of Indians coming here as a rule do not concern themselves about the franchise, . . . the majority of them do not even possess the small property qualification required. . . .[20]

Even with the franchise open to British subjects of all races and classes except the "natives", there were only some 250 Indians on the Voters' Roll out of a total of 9,000 registered voters or in proportion of one Indian voter to 36 Europeans in possession of the franchise. It, therefore, stood to reason, that the Bill would fully meet the requirements of the case for many long years, if not for all time.

> The fact of the matter is that, apart from numbers altogether, the superior race will always hold the reins of government. We are inclined to the belief, therefore, that *the danger of the Indian vote swamping the European is a chimerical one.*[21]

Finally, if all their endeavours failed to keep the roll pure, there was nothing to prevent them from raising the franchise qualification, which at the time was very low. It could "be easily increased, even doubled and an educational test imposed" which, while it would "not remove a single European from the Voters' Roll", would have "a sweeping effect on Indian voters".[22]

This was exactly what Gandhiji had been telling every one who would listen to him, only to be refuted by the Natal whites. Soon the Ministerial organ was trying to wriggle out of the position that it discovered to be anomalous. Challenged to prove the necessity for the new Bill when, according to its own admission, the danger of the Indian votes swamping the European votes was "chimerical", it wrote:

> *Perhaps it is, but we have to deal with it as if it were a real danger—not altogether, as we have explained, because of our own views on the matter, but because of the views we know to be strongly held by the rest of the Europeans in the country.*[23]

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They had been once isolated from the rest of South Africa by want of railway communication. They did not wish to be again put into Coventry by reason of their coloured vote, which would cause them to be dubbed by their South African neighbouring States as a "semi-Asiatic Colony".

This, instead of mending matters, in the context of the situation that was fast developing in the two Republics, made the position worse. Chickens had come home to roost.

In a detailed review of Gandhiji's "Appeal" G. W. W. had contested his statement, that Indians enjoyed franchise in their own country. But instead of engaging in a dialectical duel with that critic Gandhiji told him that this was really beside the point. The question that the Colonists had to address to themselves and answer was whether or not it was necessary to disfranchise the Indian community:

> If it is, I submit that the proof of the fact that they enjoy representative institutions in India will not make it less so. If it is not, why harass Indians by ambiguous legislation? If the answer to the question whether or not the Indians enjoy representative institutions in India is to decide the franchise question, I submit that the materials of knowledge about the subject are by no means so slender that the Colonists cannot decide the question now and for ever, without the necessity of an Act leaving it an open question to be decided hereafter by a Court of Law, involving a useless waste of money.[24]

Complimenting his critic on the "personal fairness he has shown me in his treatment of the pamphlet", Gandhiji appealed to him for sympathetic approach to the matter of the appeal. "If he had read it with an unbiased mind . . . he would not have found any cause to differ from the views therein expressed".[25]

2

The session of the Natal Parliament that was to begin in April 1896 promised to be stormy. The Ministry was being taunted for indulging in tall talk which it had subsequently failed to substantiate. It was even charged with bad faith. Its endeavour to come to terms with Downing Street was pointed at as a sign of supineness and eagerness to retain power at any cost. The following appeared in the *Natal Witness:*

> 'Tis true that we solemnly promised to take
> The Indian from off the roll;
> But our Bill we hadn't the gumption to fake
> To please of Lord Ripon the soul.
> So now we agreed a short measure to try,
> Which really poor Sammy protects;
> And if the Assembly will not be too fly,
> Gandhi gets all he expects.

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That's not keeping our word? Well, what are we to do?
We've neither got backbone nor brains.
Had the Colony pluck, then between me and you,
We'd be kicked out of place for our pains.[26]

The opposition was exasperated by the Government's secretiveness. In a popular satire Sir John Robinson was pilloried for his supposed "concern" for the Indian immigrant labour and his Attorney-General, Harry Escombe, for "kissing Indian babies" to solicit Indian votes at the last election. There was little love lost between the Ministry and the press.

But stay, happy thought! there is Joey B.'s Bill
To save pretty dicky birds suffering ill.
We'll make him Inspector and give him a rattle
With Kafir umfaans in the veld to do battle.
And then he can tell in each lengthy report
How protecting the birds gives unlimited sport.
Or, better than all, it will be, I should guess,
To make "Odean" censor to deal with the Press.
He'll ruin the *Witness* and worry the *Times*
Just punishment—both of 'em printed his rhymes;
And the Durbanites soon will be sadder and wiser,
When he squelches the paper that is known as the *'Tiser*;
Oh, gaily the members in Durban you'll see
Their constituents meet, when the gay *Mercuree*,
With its second-hand jokes and its woodheady tone,
Instructeth the people of Durban alone;
And a change in the feeling there soon you will note,
Which a crisis will reach when the Hindoo does vote,
And Harry and John will find exquisite bliss
In going around coolie babies to kiss.[27]

A question by Mr Johnston in the Natal Assembly on April 9 presaged the storm that was brewing. Finding that the word "Indians" occurred nowhere in the new Bill, he asked whether the "natives of India" had "representative institutions". He was told by the Premier that "the natives of the country referred to" were not possessed of representative institutions "founded on the franchise".[28] The reply was dubbed by the press as "enigmatical" and "beyond anyone's

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comprehension".[29] But it was noticed that in the Governor's address the expression "Parliamentary institutions" had been substituted for "elective representative institutions" in the draft Bill.

The Bill was to have been read for the second time on April 22. Two days before the date fixed, however, the Government, yielding to popular clamour, placed on the table the correspondence that had passed between London and Pietermaritzburg. Next day the Prime Minister informed the House that consideration of the Bill was postponed for a week; so that members could "digest" the correspondence that had been released.[30]

Justifying the postponement on the ground that the matter of the Bill was one of "the greatest importance" to the Colony, "not only as affecting its internal administration but as regards the future relationship of Natal with the rest of South Africa", the *Natal Mercury* appealed for the general support of the Bill. The fact had to be recognised, it observed, that the Bill of 1894 or any other measure of exactly the same nature, would not be passed by the Imperial Government, while the amended Bill that had been introduced in the House would be assented to and thus the danger of the Colony being left high and dry, with no protection whatever, had been avoided. The only choice before them was

> either the present Bill or none . . . members who school themselves into the belief that they can coerce the Home Government into passing a Bill such as that of 1894, not only run the risk of making themselves foolish, but also may deprive the Colony of a measure which, in a more diplomatic and statesmanlike manner, will achieve the object aimed at.[31]

The opposition looked askance at the explanation for the postponement as at the defence of the new Bill. From the documents that had been published it was clear, remarked the *Natal Advertiser*, that the words "representative institutions" had been taken over from the Colonial Secretary. But it was a question whether there was "a single race in existence, unless it be the Patagonian or the fast-perishing aborigines of Australia",[32] which could not be said to possess some sort of representative institutions. And so, in the Governor's address "Parliamentary institutions" had been substituted for the "representative institutions"—the expression used by Downing Street.

Did the postponement of the second reading mean that some bargaining was going on behind their back to induce the Home Government to agree to this alteration? If so, why was it being kept secret?

This apologia notwithstanding, the *Advertiser* maintained that the exemption clause, by itself, tarred it. That clause had obviously been introduced to meet Chamberlain's objection that in the old Act no distinction was drawn "between aliens and Her Majesty's subjects", or "between the most ignorant and the most enlightened". But what

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guarantee was there, that a Ministry that felt the office slipping from them would not be tempted to tamper with the electoral roll?

No Ministry must have the chance of gerrymandering constituencies where so many of them have but few electors. The Bill blows hot and cold, for the second clause refuses the franchise whilst the third confers it in the most objectionable manner. To leave it to Ministers to confer the franchise is to deprive Parliament of a right which is its exclusively. . . . This Bill . . . would entail both an immediate danger and deprive of a right which even the Crown ceased to invade centuries ago.[33]

On April 27, the Indian community submitted a memorial to the Honourable Speaker and Members of the Hon. the Legislative Assembly of Natal. Setting forth fresh objections to the Bill the Memorialists said:

The Bill . . . introduces the colour distinction in a most invidious manner. For, while natives of other countries not enjoying elective representative institutions may not become voters, natives of the States of Europe, even though they may not enjoy such institutions in the countries they come from, may become voters under the General Franchise Law of the Colony.

It would make the sons of non-European women of questionable reputation eligible as voters so long as the father is a European, while it would prevent the son of a European lady of noble birth, should she choose to marry a nobleman belonging to non-European race, from becoming a voter under the General Franchise Law of the Colony.

. . .The method by which (the Indians) may get themselves placed on the Voters' Roll will be a source of constant irritation to the Indian community, and may give rise to a system of favouritism and cause serious dissensions among the members of the Indian community.

The Bill is moreover calculated to involve the Indian community in endless litigation in order to enable them to vindicate their rights, which, your Memorialists think, are capable of definition without any recourse to the law courts of the Colony.

Above all, it will transfer the agitation, from the hands of the Europeans, who now wish to see the Indians disfranchised, into those of the Indian community. And the agitation, your Memorialists fear, has to be perpetual.[34]

During the reading one member, Mr Wallace, raised the point whether the petition was in order. Called upon by the Speaker to state the ground of his objection, he said, "It read more like a lecture to the Assembly than an ordinary petition".[35] The objection was overruled. The Prime Minister then announced that in view of the receipt of the Indian petition the second reading of the Bill was postponed for another week.

A question by Mr Fell, whether what had been put on the table of the Assembly was the whole of the correspondence that had passed,

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forced from the Prime Minister the admission that it was not the whole. Three dispatches had "owing to clerical error" been omitted, "but they were not of any importance".[36]

Did the forgotten letters complete the correspondence? Mr Fell again asked. He was informed that they did not. But "anything else that had passed was strictly confidential in character."[37]

The Government's replies to Mr Fell's question substantiated what the opposition had all along suspected; that the House had not been given the entire correspondence. The Governor had transmitted, on July 16, the Act that had been passed on the 2nd July, 1894. The Rosebury Administration did not quit office until the beginning of July 1895. It was scarcely believable that for a whole year Ripon was dumb. Sir John Robinson had in answer to Mr Tatham stated that they hoped the next session to introduce a Bill which would be satisfactory to all parties. If complete silence had been kept by Lord Ripon, what ground had the Ministers even for a suspicion that a new Bill would be required? The opening sentence of Mr Chamberlain's first letter ran: "Your Ministers will not be unprepared to learn that a measure of so sweeping a nature is regarded as open to the very gravest objection." Lord Ripon must have prepared the Natal Ministry for the announcement made by his successor. Where were the despatches which prepared them? the *Natal Witness* asked. It went on to observe:

"A Government desirous of concealment can treat anything it pleases as confidential, but in keeping back any portion of the correspondence on a subject which the Ministers themselves have declared to be of vital importance to the Colony, they are treating Parliament with a want of confidence and respect which . . . should be resented."[38]

If the concealed correspondence could not be obtained in any other way, the *Witness* urged, means must be found to have it asked for in the House of Commons.

It should also be ascertained, the paper suggested, whether the Bill before Parliament was "identically the same as the draft sent to Mr Chamberlain". The repeated postponement of the second reading betrayed an evident disinclination on the part of the Government to deal with the Bill. The last postponement was to give members the opportunity to "digest" the further correspondence, "yet a few minutes previously that same correspondence, for which a week's digestion was needed, was declared to be of no importance".[39] There was nothing in the correspondence that had been made public to show that the law officers of the Crown had been consulted upon the Bill. "The Bill, as it stands, is full of danger to the Colony, and is a distinct blow at Parliamentary institutions and the principle of elective bodies."[40]

With the atmosphere thus surcharged with suspicion and the Colonists clamouring for a drastic Bill which would exclude all Asia-

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tics from the franchise, it began to look more and more dubious whether the Ministry would be able to command absolute majority in the second reading. Fearing defeat, which would have carried with it their resignation, the Government met in the library of the House on the afternoon of April 5, in secret caucus to talk over things "in an informal sort of way".[41] But some half a dozen or so of the stubborn members would not have "anything to do with the matter". Among them was Mr Tatham, whose lack of "the saving quality of discretion" had earned him the title "the youthful member for the City".[42]

Sensing trouble, the Government set their "Great Persuader", Harry Escombe, to work. His method of conversion for "our invertebrate politicians" by "metaphorically jumping down their throats 'boots and spurs and all' ",[43] worked wonders. The waverers and the refractory ones were brought round. The fear of defeat was averted.[44]

3

The Bill with the latest amendments came up for the second reading on May 6. The gallery was crowded with journalists. Leader-writers and editors "scenting presumptive slaughter of the franchise from afar" had gathered "as birds of prey to devour the carcass". The *Witness* led with eight representatives, "beginning with juvenile precocity and ending with venerable antiquity". Public interest, however, was at a low ebb and the whole debate was so below the mark that, as one visitor put it, he was "glad for the reputation of our Assembly" that the Visitors' Galleries were "pretty well tenantless". A House of Commons fan, who was present at the debate on the Address, confessed that he "fell asleep at least ten times".

At 3.30 in the afternoon the franchise debate opened and occupied two hours exactly, the Prime Minister's opening remarks lasting for 30 minutes. His reply and the Attorney-General's legal explanation took another half-hour. The remaining hour was taken up by Messrs Binns, Bale, Hulett, Smythe, O'Meara and Baynes.

In moving the second reading Sir John Robinson said that the previous Bill had failed because it was "too direct, too blunt". Above all it was a Bill which disqualified by name a certain section of Her Majesty's subject "which represented at least 200,000,000 people; a section of H.M.'s subjects, whose interests could not be ignored by the Government of the Empire". The principle of both Bills, he maintained, was identical—to exclude the Asiatic from the franchise. The Bill before them was in fact, "more comprehensive" in its scope than the former Bill, in that it applied not only to one race but "all races of people who were not by descent entitled to exercise this elective institution or had not hitherto possessed it" (Applause).

The Home Government had approached the question in a spirit

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"so frank and still so friendly, so conciliatory and yet so firm in its expression of intention", the Prime Minister pleaded, that they were bound, if they desired to achieve the object in view, to approach the question in a like spirit. They had therefore endeavoured to devise a Bill that would meet the requirements of Her Majesty's Government and would at the same time not less fail to meet the requirements of the Colony itself. The Bill before them fulfilled these conditions.

He joined issue with those prophets of gloom who predicted that the Bill would fail to achieve its object. The Secretary of State and his experts had "entirely denied" that the people of India possessed representative institutions. To set at rest any doubts that might exist, the Government had, however, asked the Secretary of State if he would agree to the insertions of the words "founded on the franchise" in the second clause after "elective representative institutions".

As to the objection that the exemption clause would enable any Government of the day to swamp the constituencies by placing on the roll an indefinite number of voters, he characterised it as an "impossible plea". In support he cited a contention contained in the Indian petition: the number of Indian voters existing in the Colony was so small as to have no appreciable effect on the destinies of the country or on the course of legislation. That, he remarked, was by itself a sufficient answer to the objection raised. Besides, the Government being responsible to the people of the Colony and the electors of the European race, and the latter being united in opinion that the Asiatic voters should not be admitted to the franchise,

> their constituents would rise and unite against any attempt on the part of a Responsible Government to do this thing. Every white elector in the whole electorate of the Colony would stand shoulder to shoulder as one man in opposition to such a proposal, which would be political suicide on the part of the Government that might attempt it. (hear, hear).[45]

He indignantly repudiated the suggestion that the Government were making a bargain with the question of the transfer of Zululand in connection with the Bill. The measure before the House had been dealt with absolutely on its own merits.

He slunk out of the declaration made two years ago that if the Bill was vetoed by the Home Government it would be passed "again and again". This remark was made, he disarmingly admitted, "without full knowledge and realisation of the facts. Ministers saw the insuperable difficulties the Imperial Government would have to encounter if assent were given to a measure of that character."

The measure before them, which had practically received the assent of Her Majesty's Government, could come into force soon if it were passed. It would be the height of madness, not to take advantage of the opportunity. Before the end of next year there must be a general

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election. They knew not what Indians might be placed on the roll. The time had come "to seize the question by the throat and settle it once for all" without further delay. The Bill imposed no stigma upon any section of Her Majesty's subjects, but it guaranteed the "purity" of the electorate.

He had earlier tried to make the flesh of the members creep by working on the fright with which the phenomenal rise of the Indian Congress had filled the Europeans' mind. The rapidity with which the Indian petition was got up and signed by "a large number of illiterate people", illustrated the magnitude of a political danger they had to meet, dangers and evils they had to combat. While he would not go so far as to say, he remarked, that the petition was the "emanation or production of one man—M. K. Gandhi"—a strong presumption was that it was the emanation of "a very small body" of members of the Indian community, "and it served to show how formidable might be the influence of such an organisation if the Indians possessed a larger degree of political power than they possessed at present". Ending on this very note he asserted:

> Members might not be aware that there was in this country a body, a *very powerful body* in its way, *a very united body, though practically a secret body—he meant the Indian Congress. That was a body which possessed large funds, it was a body presided over by very active and very able men, and it was a body the avowed object of which was to exercise strong political power in the affairs of the Colony.*[46] (See p. 483)

He asked for a unanimous vote of the House. If the Bill was not passed by a unanimous vote of the Assembly, "or at any rate, a large majority," it would give justification for "the assumption elsewhere" that the opinion of the Colony had somewhat changed in that respect since they had unanimously passed the Bill of 1894.

Mr Binns opposing the Bill regretted that the Prime Minister had not taken advantage of the Law of 1883 which debarred such persons as were governed by special laws or came under the operation of special tribunals from being put on the voters' list. It had been objected that that law had become inoperative as special tribunals had since been abolished. If so, alteration in the wording of the law would put the matter right. The Bill before them was based on the supposition that there were no representative institutions in India, no Parliamentary institutions and no elective principle in action. But even the dictum of Secretary of State could not override hard facts. Citing chapter and verse he showed that these principles were acknowledged in India and that Parliamentary institutions existed too. "Honourable Members might be extremely surprised on consulting dictionaries and law books to find what an extensive meaning 'franchise' had."[47]

Anticipating the argument that what obtained in India was not

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the full privilege of franchise known in England and Natal, he reminded the members that "the elective principle was the same function, the Parliament was the same", and therefore the Bill was wrong. "It contained a fact that was not correct and it would lead them into endless litigation, difficulty and trouble." It was impossible for him to vote for the second reading.

In replying the Attorney-General admitted that if the words "or tribunals" in the Law of 1883 were deleted there would be no necessity for the new Bill. The reason they refused to do this was that "it would appear to be doing things by a side-wind". They preferred to do it openly, by the light of the day. It was necessary, he maintained, to admit Indians of education and attainments, but no new man could be admitted except through the Governor-in-Council, which meant on the responsibility of Ministers, and no Ministry could hold office for even 14 days if it attempted the alteration of constituencies by the introduction of a certain class of electors. As to Mr Binns' remarks on the franchise, he admitted that there was a franchise in India, but he absolutely denied that there was "elective representative institutions in India founded on the franchise". The franchise was "a freedom understood the whole world through".[48]

Mr Bale supported Mr Binns. The word franchise, he said, to his mind had "not so restricted a meaning as that which the Attorney-General put upon it". The Bill would "give rise to litigation, produce feelings of hostility and create a ferment among the Indians themselves". It would further induce appeals to the Privy Council and prejudice the election of the (white) members to the House.

Mr Smythe, recalling the old saying, "Half a loaf is better than no bread", urged the passing of the second reading.

Mr Baynes made a speech against the Bill which was described as "short but forceful". After the Prime Minister had replied to the debate the motion for the second reading for the Bill was put. A few "noes" were uttered but Mr Baynes' "NO" drowned all the others. The motion was agreed to without a division, Baynes alone dissenting.

Then the House adjourned at 5.25 p.m.[49]

Commenting on the Prime Minister's speech the *Natal Witness* ventured to ask "whether the intention (of the Bill) would have been stated too 'bluntly' had 'Parliamentary institutions' appeared in the draft Bill instead of 'representative' "?[50]

On May 18, 1896, the Bill was committed to Committee of both Houses. The Government were persuaded, Sir John observed, that with the modification alluded to when it was read for the second time, it "fully and completely" fulfilled the object in view. However, to make assurance doubly sure they had secured the consent of Her Majesty's Government to the introduction of the words "founded on the Parliamentary franchise", after the words "institutions". That portion of

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the Bill as modified would therefore read: "Natives of countries which have not hitherto possessed elective representative institutions *founded on the Parliamentary franchise* would not be qualified to have their names inserted on the list of electors."[51] His statement was received with loud applause.

A battle royal was fought over "hitherto" in clause 2 and over the exemption clause.

Mr Leuchars, Member for Durban City, moved an amendment to insert the words "prior to the passage of the Act" for the word "hitherto". Supporting the amendment, Mr Maydon argued that the Bill as it stood could be construed to mean that while any arrival from a country outside those settled in Natal, where up to the date of propounding of the question in the Natal courts the inhabitants had not been entitled to the franshise, should be debarred, any settler propounding it subsequent to the granting of a Parliamentary franchise in such country should not be debarred, and should therefore be entitled to the franchise in Natal. The issue in that event would depend "not upon the intentions of this House, not upon the intentions of the Ministers responsible for this Bill, not even upon the intention of the Secretary of State, . . . but solely upon the dictum of a judge with whom the niceties of language must be the sole standard of his judgment, and from whose mind all legislative intentions, or even all equities must be banished".[52] Judgment must go entirely upon the strict provisions of the statute.

Proceeding, Mr Maydon alluded to the possibility of extension of the Parliamentary franchise to Indians as a reason why there should be no mistake made in the interpretation that might be put upon the phrasing of the Bill. If any loopholes were left in the Bill, they might be fully utilised, if not by the Indian community as a whole, by the man who had led them

> . . . an individual who has more than once been referred to in this debate, of considerable talent, not great scrupulosity and very large ambition. It has already and it will still more in the future suit this leader to fight every inch of ground in endeavouring to obtain for the body of his people that influence over the electoral power which, if they possess, will make him a personage. . . . Ever since this question has been before this Assembly, *his arts, his cleverness, his resource, though arrayed against our desire, have compelled our admiration. I want to ask whether against such an adversary it is worth while to leave open any loophole*?[53]

For some time that man, Mr Maydon went on to say, had been gathering resources for the purpose of fighting to the bitter end the proposed Bill or any similar Bill. He had the sinews of war. The Indian Congress was well endowed with funds. They must therefore be extremely wary.

The Prime Minister replying explained that the Bill was in the

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nature of an agreement between the Home Government and themselves. It would be unfair to reopen the question with the Home Government after the assurances they had given them on the subject. Mr Maydon had laid stress on the attitude of an "able, clever and influential" member of the Indian community. He thought that Mr Maydon had attached "too much importance to the gentleman".

After Messrs Binns, Baynes and Symons had supported the amendment and Bale opposed it, the Premier intervening told the House that in addition to the reason already given in favour of the wording used in the Bill, they should know that not only had the Bill been before the Secretary of State but it was the result of experience of "eminent law advisers of the Crown".

This brought Mr Maydon to his feet. With all respect to the "eminent legal advisers of the Crown" whose opinion he had not had the benefit of seeing, he would submit, he said, that the interpretation of the clause would not be with them. It was to void the possibility of misinterpretation that he had urged the adoption of the amendment to do away with "hitherto" which was of somewhat dubious meaning.[54]

Mr Maydon's "dig" drew no reply. After some further discussion, the amendment being put to vote was lost by 23 votes to 9.

Mr Symons, member from Umvote, next moved an amendment for deletion of the provision for exemption in Clause 3, characterising it as "un-English" and "un-constitutional".

Mr Bale thought it was quite possible that the power given to the Governor-in-Council under this provision would be wisely used, but they were not legislating only for one Government, but for many future Governments.

After Mr Binns had supported and Mr Tatham opposed the amendment Mr Archibald spoke. The House would do well to bear in mind, he said, that any alteration would render it necessary to send the Bill Home, and that would entail serious inconvenience.

Mr Maydon shared Mr Bale's fear that there might not be always a strong Government and "this placed a temptation in the way of a weak Government", but said that in spite of this he intended supporting the Bill on Mr Smythe's dictum that half a loaf was better than no bread.

Mr Smythe reminded the House that the Bill was a compromise and no doubt the exemption clause was the clause which the Home Government had obtained as their side of the bargain. If they cut out that clause it would be fatal to the Bill.

The clause was adopted with 28 "ayes" and 3 "noes" (Messrs Bale, Baynes and Symons). The Bill then passed through Committee.[55] The same day it was read for the third time in the Assembly.[56] Two days later it was sent up to the Council, where, after the Attorney-General had explained the provisions and a motion for adjournment was made and

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withdrawn, the second reading was agreed to.[57]

The rest was plain sailing. The opposition had been out-manœuvred. It was hoist with its own petard of hysteria that had made it so prone to imaginary fears. The issue of the South African Federation was dead and buried as far as one could see. To some of its former champions it had even become like a red rag to a bull while with others it remained only as a pipe-dream.

After going through Committee and the third reading in the Council, the new Franchise Amendment Bill was sent up by the Governor to the Colonial Secretary for receiving Royal Assent. The Indian community was still not without hope that after all the assurances that Mr Chamberlain had given to their British and Indian friends in England, he would advise Her Majesty's Government to disallow it like its predecessor the Franchise Amendment Bill of 1894.

A side issue to the Franchise Debate was the episode arising out of Sir John Robinson's reference to the Indian Congress as "practically a secret body". How could he have made that remark after months of fierce controversy, following Captain Lucas's strictures in the "Stone-throwing case", in the Natal Press? His own paper had protested against the unjust insinuation. Gandhiji challenged the statement.

Gandhi to the Hon. the Prime Minister *Durban May* 14, 1896.

May I venture to enquire if that portion of your speech is correctly reported, and if so, whether there are any grounds for the belief that the Congress is 'practically a secret body'? I may be permitted to draw your attention to the fact that when the intention of forming such a body was made it was announced in the papers, that when it was actually formed its formation was noticed by the *Witness*, that the annual report and list of members and rules have been supplied to and commented upon by the Press, and that these papers have also been supplied to the Government by me in my capacity as Honorary Secretary to the Congress.[58]

C. Bird, Principal Under Secretary, to Gandhi *Durban May* 16, 1896.

In answer to your letter to the Prime Minister of the 14th instant. . . I am desired by Sir John Robinson to state that, in speaking of that Congress as practically a secret body, he did so under the belief that meetings of the Congress are not open to the public and the Press.

If the Prime Minister has been misinformed on this point, I am to state that he will be glad to be corrected on the subject.[59]

Gandhi to C. Bird Esq. *Durban May* 18, 1896.

I beg to state with regard to the matter that the Congress meetings are held always with open doors, and they are open to the Press and public. Certain European gentlemen who, the Congress members thought, might be interested in the meetings, were specially invited. One gentleman did accept the invitation and attend a Congress meeting. Uninvited European visitors also have attended the Congress meetings once or twice.

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One of the Congress rules provides that Europeans may be invited to become Vice-Presidents. According thereto, two gentlemen were asked if they would accept the honour, but they were not disposed to do so. Minutes of the Congress proceedings are regularly kept.[60]

On May 20, Sir John Robinson in a statement in Parliament said that he had an explanation to make. When in moving the second reading of the Indian Franchise Bill he had referred to the Indian Congress as being "practically a secret body" he was in the belief that its meetings were not open, but he had also said that if he had been misinformed on the point he would be very glad to make the correction. He had since received a communication from the secretary of that body who informed him that he had incorrectly described the proceedings of the Congress. To make the *amende honourable* he then gave to the House the gist of the correspondence that had passed.[61]

Once again did the Congress come out of the ordeal unscathed. From all appearances it looked as if the Prime Minister had made that misleading statement as a handy ruse to stampede the wavering members of the Natal Assembly into voting with the Government when the fate of the Indian Franchise Bill seemed uncertain and withdrew it after it had served its purpose. But Gandhiji accepted the recantation at its face value. To put the most favourable construction on the opponent's words and actions, consistently with truth, became his second nature. Very cordial relations, based on mutual appreciation and faith in each other's bonafides, sprang up thereafter between him and Sir John, which continued even after the latter's retirement from office. They began to exchange "love letters" and Sir John lived publicly to express his warm appreciation of Gandhiji's services to the Colony and the Empire and to thank him for it.

4

The Franchise debate on the whole was adjudged as a moral defeat for the Ministry. The passage of the Bill had been secured by a "mechanical majority" in the Assembly in spite of the poor show put up by the Government. The insertion of the words "founded on the franchise" and ultimately "founded on the Parliamentary franchise" was a triumph of the Indian petition. The Attorney-General had failed to adduce any legal authority in refutation of the contentions made by Messrs Binns and Bale. The consensus of opinion among the whites was that the Bill, instead of removing the danger of the "Asiatic vote", from their point of view left the Colony in an even more "perilous" position. To answer his critics the Prime Minister had been driven to take shelter behind the Indian contention set forth in "An Appeal to Every Briton in South Africa". If the "Appeal" was right, the Bill was wrong.

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The *Natal Advertiser* branded the new measure as "duplicity". The Attorney-General had stated, as his reason for not making use of that position of the Law of 1883 which debarred from the Parliamentary franchise all those subject to special legislation and special courts, that the Ministry declined to achieve the end in view by "a side-wind". But what was the present Bill if not a "side-wind"? the *Advertiser* asked. "The whole object is to endeavour 'quietly and by a side-wind' that which the measure of the last session had failed to accomplish". The Prime Minister had admitted that that measure was "brutally blunt" and that was the reason of its failure. But he had also said that the new Bill had precisely the same object in view as the "Brutal Bill". In other words it did not state the object "so honestly and straight-forwardly" but sought "quietly and by a 'side-wind' to reach the goal apparently unattainable by plain sailing".[62]

Still another instance of its "duplicity" was the exemption clause. This clause obviously was inserted with the idea of leading the Imperial Government to suppose that "the power of exemption would occasionally be used—sparingly perhaps, but still used". Yet the Attorney-General's declaration in the Assembly in that regard meant, if it meant anything at all, that the Ministry had no intention to exercise their right of exemption. Then why was it placed in the Bill? "Is there not at least an appearance of dissimulating or utilising a 'side-wind' . . . in inserting a provision in a measure which its framers declare in submitting it for adoption they meant to treat as a dead-letter?" Each line of the Bill, the *Advertiser* warned, was "an ambuscade of disputes", which would "come out in the open some day to perpetuate for years, and probably with increased bitterness, the struggle between the Indians and the Europeans in this Colony with regard to the vote."[63]

The *Natal Witness* described the Bill, "which most of the leading members are distrustful of, which they can see is a compromise, and a compromise which may prove quite ineffectual, as a most dangerous invasion of the privileges of the Assembly", as well as an attack upon constitutional principles. "When a great constitutional principle is once broken through, however slightly it may be, there is the imminent risk of the breach being widened by a Government greedy of power."[64] The Bill was full of absurdities and unanswered questions. To instance:

(a) It would keep out the offspring of European parents born in India, whilst the Maori of New Zealand and the Negro of Jamaica and other West Indian islands, or born in British possessions in North America, would be eligible.

(b) It had been stated that the Mahomedan subjects of the Sultan came under the ban. But was it or was it not a fact that Turkey possessed a Parliament under the constitution granted by the present Sultan in 1876? That constitution was only "temporarily" suspended by Proclamation in 1878 but it had never been withdrawn. Egypt

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possessed a Legislative Council and a Legislative Assembly. Were natives of Turkey and Egypt eligible as electors in Natal?

(c) Were "elective representative institutions" possessed by Mauritius, Jamaica, Hong Kong, and even by India in virtue of the Legislative Council Acts?

(d) Again, supposing that the Queen's Proclamation of 1858 did not confer the full rights of British citizenship upon persons born in India, were the children of such persons born in Natal, eligible to become electors in the Colony without requiring the previous consent of the Governor in Council?

(e) Was it competent for a Colony to alter the law regulating Imperial citizenship?

(f) Was a Russian Jew a native of a country possessing elective representative institutions, and could he be said to be of a European origin? The laws of Russia itself said that he was not a Russian citizen and imposed upon him special disabilities such as residence in the sixteen Western provinces of the Empire to which the name had been given of "the Jewish Pale". Inasmuch as he was thus affected by special legislation in the sense of the Natal Constitution of 1856 and of Law 2 of 1883, was such a Jew entitled to be placed on the electoral roll without applying to the Governor in Council?[65]

In their endeavour to devise a formula which would exclude the Asiatic without mentioning the true ground for the exclusion, which was racial, they had blundered from one expedient to another. "Elective representative institutions" was first tried. When it was found that this would not answer the purpose, the Governor in his Address was made to use the expression "Parliamentary institutions". In the second reading the words "founded on the franchise" were inserted after "elective representative institutions". Finally in the Committee stage, with Mr Chamberlain's approval, "elective representative institutions founded on the Parliamentary franchise" was brought in and it was claimed by the Attorney-General that this left no loophole unplugged. In a letter to the *Natal Advertiser* an Advocate, whose forensic acumen entitled his views to "the weightiest consideration" showed that even with the latest amendment the Bill was as full of holes as a sieve. Instead of disfranchising the Indians, he assertained, it actually strengthened their claim to receive the franchise in Natal.

This was F. A. Laughton of Messrs Goodricke Laughton and Cooks, Solicitors, Durban. He had felt greatly drawn to Gandhiji by virtue of the struggle that Gandhiji by himself was carrying on in a righteous cause like a knight *sans peur et sans reproche*. At one time Gandhiji had even thought of starting legal practice in partnership with him. We shall hear more about him. "The inclination of the Indian is not that way," F. A. Laughton wrote in the *Natal Advertiser* of May 19,

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but when—if ever—it is, and when he is strong enough to make himself sufficiently felt, he will regain the franchise, if it is now taken from him, in obedience to a political law, as surely as the Uitlander will obtain it in the S.A.R. . . .

The unique spectacle is presented to us of a Ministry introducing a Bill, purposely couching its meaning in vague language, and deliberately leaving it to a court of law to determine what meaning is to be attached to its vague expressions.

What was the meaning of the expression "founded on the Parliamentary franchise?" he asked. The Bill did not say "founded on the principle of Parliamentary franchise *recognised in England, Natal or* elsewhere", but "founded on the Parliamentary franchise".[66] Acts of Parliament, which attempted to deprive a subject of his right, received "a strict construction" in Courts of Law. Indians in Natal hitherto had equal rihgts to the franchise with Europeans. The Bill that sought to deprive them of these rights would, therefore, receive a "strict" construction.

Most civilised countries have a parliamentary (or legislative) franchise; to which does the Bill refer? The only meaning which can be attached to the words . . . is . . . that such elective representative institutions *must be founded on the parliamentary franchise of the natives' country*. To attach any other meaning to the words would be straining their construction, and would lead to absurdity. Take for instance Japan, if it has any elective representative institutions founded on a parliamentary franchise, it will be its own parliamentary franchise, not that of Timbuctoo, for instance.[67]

The next question was: Was there a parliamentary (or legislative) franchise in India, and if so, what was it? The answer was:

There is, and it was created by the Acts 24 and 25 Victoria, Chapter 67; and 55 and 56 Victoria, Chapter 14; and by the regulations made under section 4 of the latter Act. . . . This is the *parliamentary* . . . franchise of India . . . it is on it that elective representative institutions of India have to be founded.[68]

That left to be answered only one point. Had India "elective representative institutions founded on (its) Parliamentary franchise?"

The answer again was, India had such institutions "founded on *its* Parliamentary—franchise, and nothing else".

The conclusion was clear:

The Bill in seeking, in ambiguous terms, to deprive Indians of the franchise, has failed in its object, and has thereby given to Indians a firmer grip of the franchise than ever they had before, and has rendered further legislation on the subject well-nigh impossible, because what Secretary of State will not hesitate to allow us to have a second shot at the Indian, after we have

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given him the franchise under two Legislative Acts, and perhaps forced him to the Privy Council in vindication of his rights.?[69]

The publication of Laughton's letter and his conclusion caused considerable stir in the Natal Press because of his acknowledged position in legal circles and deepened the misgivings of the Natal whites. Passing of the Bill began to look at best a Pyrrhic victory for the Government.

It seemed hardly credible at the first blush that the chance presence on the Natal political scene of an individual unknown to fame, who had only recently arrived in the Colony as a junior Attorney, and whose name till a couple of years no one had even heard, should have come within an ace of completely upsetting the white colonists' apple-cart when they were so sure of success. He had taken on the entire white press ranged against him and not only held his own in the battle of wits, but even won over, in the teeth of their combined opposition and the opposition of a self-governing Colony, an influential section of enlightened British opinion at Home, and even the Imperial Government in more than one issue. His image had loomed above the whole of the Franchise debate. One speaker after another had referred to him as a factor to be reckoned with and when Sir John Robinson in answer to his critics had remarked that "too much importance had been attached to a gentleman who was not named in the debate, but whom everyone knew to be Mr Gandhi", he was rebuked by the *Natal Witness*, for his nonchalance and told that, on the contrary, the Ministry had been "attaching too little importance to him and have left loopholes in their Bill of which he will not be slow to avail himself".[70]

Some would have even liked to see him deported. An Indian national, S.A. Ruffee, a Government officer, had made himself a *persona non grata* to the whites. Two days after the postponement of the second reading of the Franchise Bill it was stated in the Natal Parliament that the Governor-in-Council had made a grant of £200 to ensure his return to India. "Cheap at the money" was Mr Binns' comment. Another member, Mr Winter, thereupon asked if it was not possible "to send Mr Gandhi home at the same price".[71] But he was a different customer. Neither physical danger, nor threats had any effect upon him. Cajoling left him cold. They could not help liking him even when they wished to get rid of him. He baffled them. If even in a political lampoon an individual is depicted by his opponents as having "a temper sweet as candy" and "a book and pencil handy"[72] (to rhyme with "Ghandy"), it is a sure sign that personal animus has given place to compulsive scratching of unavowed affection.

Mr Maydon had called him in the Natal Assembly an individual of "not great scrupulosity" and "very large ambition". The first part of the accusation was nailed to the counter by the *Natal Witness* when it wrote:

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Are they indulging the hope that the sop of the franchise, as a mark of their esteem for abilities of which Mr Maydon spoke so highly, would be accepted by the Indian barrister as a retaining fee and detach him from the cause he is at present advocating ?[73]

The other was given the lie by the disclosure made by the man of "very great ambition" in the columns of the *Natal Mercury*, in the following year, that although three opportunities had passed by he had deliberately refrained from getting himself placed on the voters' list.

I do not aspire to any Parliamentary honours whatever. . . . Those who know me personally know well in what direction my ambition lies.[74]

What his soul aspired to and what the goal of his life's ambition was—which gave him the strange fascination and power that he exercised over all, friend and opponent alike, and to which he owed his meteoric rise in the political firmament of Natal under circumstances the most adverse conceivable—we shall come presently to.

5

Braced for fight against the wall, Gandhiji had already telegraphed to Sir William Hunter the Indian community's intention to oppose the Franchise Bill. He had also informed Dadabhai Naoroji that a Memorial to Mr Chamberlain in connection with it was under preparation. In reply Sir William, wishing him "all success in your public spirited labours", wrote:

I had a long interview with the Secretary of State for India a fortnight ago on the grievances of British Indian subjects in South Africa. He was much interested. . . . He expressed his sympathy, but mentioned the difficulty of adding further elements of disturbance at the present moment to our complications in South Africa.

Sir William had great hope that justice would in the end be done though it might be slow in coming. He had only one fear.

You have a good cause; but it has unfortunately got mixed up in English opinion with the monotone of complaint made by the Indian Congress party. I myself sympathise with much in the Congress movement. Yet I cannot help thinking that any really good cause, like that of the British Indian subjects in South Africa, suffers in England from being too prominently connected with the Congress platform.

On receipt of the Memorial he promised carefully to consider what steps were practicable. In the meantime he advised the Indians to remain firm.

You have only to take up your position strongly in order to be successful.

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That position is that the British Indian subjects in South Africa are, alike in our own colonies and in independent friendly states, being deprived of their *status* as British subjects guaranteed to them by the Sovereign and the British Parliament.[75]

There was encouraging news from Dadabhai Naoroji also.

Dadabhai Naoroji to Gandhiji *May* 21, 1896.

I am glad that your Memorial will be considered and no action or decision will be taken before it is received or considered.[76]

On the following day the Indian community sent a Memorial to Mr Chamberlain drafted by Gandhiji. Sir John Robinson, the Memorialists submitted, in moving the second reading of the Bill had given three reasons for his fears:

1. The fact of the petition to Her Majesty's Government in connection with the Franchise Act, repealed by the new Bill, being signed by nearly 9,000 Indians.
2. The approaching general election in the Colony.
3. The existence of the Natal Indian Congress.[77]

As for the first, the Prime Minister himself had admitted that there was no real danger of the Indian vote swamping the European in any measurable distance of time. In regard to the approaching general election, the disfranchisement had been threatened for the last two years. The Electoral Roll had twice undergone revision since. The Indians had every incentive to add to the Indian vote, lest many might be shut out. And yet there had been not a single addition to the Voters' List from the Indian community.[78] The Congress had not in any shape or form "intended or attempted to exercise strong political power". The charge of secrecy had been withdrawn by the Prime Minister on the floor of the Natal Assembly. Whatever modest funds the Congress had been able to raise were used in philanthropy, and in meeting the cost of printing memorials and working expenses etc. They were hardly sufficient to fulfil the objects of the Congress. In fact the educational work was greatly hampered owing to paucity of funds. "Your Memorialists, therefore, venture to submit that the danger which the present Bill is intended to guard against does not exist at all."

Reiterating that they had neither asked nor expected that Her Majesty's Government should accept their facts as correct on their *ipse dixit*, the Memorialists went on to suggest that if there was any doubt about any of them—"and the most important fact is that there are thousands who did not possess the necessary property qualifications for becoming voters"—then the proper course, was to enquire about them, particularly to enquire how many Indians there were in the Colony who possessed immovable property of the value of £ 50 or who paid a yearly rent of £ 10.

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To prepare such a return would neither cost much time nor much money, and would be a very material help towards a satisfactory solution of the Franchise question. The hot haste to pass *some* measure is, in your Memorialists' humble opinion, detrimental to the best interests of the Colony as a whole. Your Memorialists, so far as they, as representatives of the Indian community, are concerned and speaking authoritatively for the organisation of which they have the honour to be members, . . . beg to assure Her Majesty's Government that *they have no intention to endeavour to place a single Indian voter on the Voters' List for the general election next year.*[79]

The *Natal Mercury* had openly admitted that "the danger" of the Indian vote swamping the European was "a chimerical one". The instance of Mauritius, where the franchise qualifications were lower than those in the Colony, also pointed in the same direction. "With these qualifications there is evidently no trouble in Mauritius, although the Indian population is twice as large as the general population and the Indians in Mauritius belong to the same class as the Indians in Natal."[80]

The Natal Press had practically been unanimous in condemning the devious way in which the legislation was being promoted. If Her Majesty's Government were convinced that a real necessity existed for legislation restricting the Indian franchise in Natal, and if Her Majesty's Government were satisfied that the question could not be dealt with but by class legislation, and if Her Majesty's Government further accepted the Colonial view that Indian British subjects in spite of the Proclamation of 1858, could be treated on a different footing from that on which the European British subjects were treated, then, the petitioners respectfully submitted, "It would be infinitely better and more satisfactory to exclude the Indians by name from any rights and privileges that they, in the opinion of Her Majesty's Government, should not be allowed to enjoy, than that by ambiguous legislation the door should be left open for litigation and trouble."[81]

The new Bill was not finite. It had been described by the Government as "an experimental measure". The honourable and learned Attorney-General in the second reading had said that if "contrary to their belief" the Bill should fall short of what was intended, there "never would be rest in the Colony" &c.

"Under such circumstances," the Memorialists prayed that

> unless all the resources, without resort to class legislation, are tried and have failed (i.e. assuming that there is a danger of the Indian vote swamping the European), a Bill like the present one should not be passed.[82]

Disowning categorically any wish on the part of the Indian community to shape the political destiny of South Africa, the Memorialists maintained that the question was not how many or what Indians were to have the vote, but what *status* the British Indians were to occupy

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outside India in the Colonies and allied States. If there was the slightest danger of the Indian vote preponderating, they went on to say,

> a simple educational test may be imposed on all alike, either with or without an increase in property qualifications. . . . And if such test failed, a more severe test may be imposed, which would tell against the Indians without materially affecting the European vote.[83]

Finally, if nothing short of the total exclusion of Indians from the franchise would be acceptable to the Natal Government and if Her Majesty's Government were inclined to favour such a demand, then it had to be admitted that "nothing short of specific exclusion of the Indians by name would satisfactorily meet the difficulty". But such was not the case. The European Colonists as a body made no such demand. For this they had in fact been rebuked by the *Natal Advertiser*. The Bill that had been passed was unsatisfactory from the point of view of those who wished to see the Indians disfranchised as also from that of the Indians themselves.[84] If assented to it would give rise to endless litigation owing to its ambiguity and involve the Indian community in expense altogether beyond their capacity. The *Natal Witness* had said that "no explanation, at least no satisfactory one" had been given "for the anxiety to rush the Bill through". The *Natal Advertiser* had opined that "this Indian franchise question" was "a most vital one and there should be no haste in settling it for ever. Indeed the best course would be to postpone the proposed Bill and have the whole matter for the consideration of the constituencies when they have accurate information before them".[85] *The Times* had condemned the measure as being unwarranted, wholly unnecessary and containing in it the seeds of "a war of races among our subjects", which Her Majesty's Government could not afford. The Memorialists therefore confidently hoped that the assent to the Bill that had gone to London would be withheld,

> and if there be any fear as to the European vote being swamped by the Indian, an enquiry be ordered to ascertain whether there actually exists any such danger under the existing law, or such other relief will be granted as may meet the ends of justice.[86]

This was, however, like appealing to a judge against a wrong of which he is himself the author and who, besides, is judge, jury and executioner combined. Chamberlain had set the pattern, as the Indians were soon to discover, of making promises to the ear to be broken to the heart, putting something into a persistent petitioner's pocket with one hand and quietly picking that pocket with the other. Of his "duplicity" they were to have more and more bitter experience in the years to come. On September 25, 1896, C. Bird, the Principal Under Secretary to the Government of Natal, communicated to the Memorialists at Durban

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Mr. Chamberlain's decision.

. . . I have to inform you that the Governor has received a Despatch from the Secretary of State in which Mr Chamberlain requests that the persons who signed this Memorial may be informed that Her Majesty's Government has carefully considered their representations, but has not felt justified in advising Her Majesty to disallow the Act.[87]

Shortly after the promulgation of the new Franchise Act, Captain Lucas dismissed the application of an Indian school master, Anbeoo Royeppen, for inclusion in the voters' list.[88] The natural sequel to it would have been a test case before the Supreme Court of Natal and ultimately before the Privy Council. But the Indians were for the time being content with having successfully kept out class legislation directly aimed at them on racial grounds. The Bill of 1894 that had been disallowed was a Bill of that character. The new Act did not mention the Indians by name. Though in intent and in effect it was class legislation, it was couched in general terms. It was not made expressly applicable to Indians alone but to all British subjects. True, if a law that imposed general restrictions were enforced against the Indians in a specially rigorous manner, the object of the legislation would all the same have been attained. Still, as Gandhiji pointed out, it would have been a general law. Indians would not have felt insulted by its enactment, and if and when in course of time the prevailing bitterness was softened, a more liberal administration of the law would have sufficed to relieve the aggrieved community. There would have been no need to modify the law in question.

In the case of a special law, however, in which Indians were specifically named and which established "colour bar", to alter public opinion would first need to be so far educated that the majority of the Colonists were not only to hostile but actually friendly to the Asiatics. Pending that consummation, "colour bar" could not be removed. Granting for the sake of argument that the Indians did not enjoy the parliamentary franchise, still under the new franchise law it would not have constituted an illegal act by itself if the officer in charge of voters' lists in Natal were to include the names of Indians in the list.

There is always a general presumption in favour of the right of the subject. So long therefore as the government of the day does not become positively hostile, the names of Indians and others could be included in the electoral roll, the above law notwithstanding. That is to say, if the dislike for Indians became less marked and if the local Government was unwilling to injure the Indians, their names could be entered in the voters' lists without the slightest modification of the law.[89]

This made all the difference. The Indians had again and again declared that they had no political ambition; their fight was essentially

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against degradation. The insult removed, they could wait. The struggle for their rights could in the meantime be carried on by other means that were still open to them. It was enough for them that the fight they had put up had made the condition of Indians overseas "a question of first rate importance in the eyes of the Imperial Government".

The consequence of it was twofold. On the one hand, in all the colonies where Indians had settled, "they awoke to the importance of their own position". On the other, the European also awoke to "the danger which they thought the Indians were to their predominance". Things were heading for a crisis. To meet it needed much preparation. The Indians felt thankful for the small mercy that gave them respite.

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CHAPTER XXII

FROM SEARCH FOR A LIVING TO SEARCH FOR GOD

1

SINCE HIS arrival in South Africa three years earlier in 1893 a profound change had taken place in Gandhiji. He had gone there in search of a living. A series of unusual personal experiences had kindled in him the urge for service. The attempts of his Christian friends to wean him from his ancestral faith had led him to plunge into religious studies. Study of Christianity had further whetted his appetite for spiritual knowledge. But all these activities were ancillary to his professional work, which naturally came first. In the years that followed this imperceptibly changed. While his public activity continued to expand and occupied more and more of his time, search for truth became increasingly his all-absorbing passion. Service of the community and political work became the means of this search and an expression of his inner religious life. The inner quest thus led him to the way of service through which alone, he came to feel, could God be realised. Far from hindering, it invigorated his public activity and added to it a new dimension.

Towards the close of his stay at Pretoria, another influence had entered his life—that of Count Leo Tolstoy, the Russian sage, philosopher and man of letters, who next only to Shrimad Rajchandra was to exert on him the most powerful influence. Sore perplexed at heart under increasing pressure from his Christian missionary friends, who had befriended him when he was friendless to renounce the faith of his forefathers in favour of Christianity, whose tenets as propounded by them he could not accept, he had opened correspondence with Edward Maitland, when a well-wisher in England sent him a copy of the Count's *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, that had appeared in A. Delano's English translation in February of that very year. "I was overwhelmed," he says in his *Autobiography*, "before the independent thinking, profound morality, and truthfulness of this book, all the books given me by Mr Coates seemed to pale into insignificance." In a glowing public tribute on the occasion of Tolstoy's Birth Centenary Celebration in the late nineteen-twenties, he recalled how he was passing through a severe inner crisis of scepticism and doubt, when he came across *The Kingdom of God is Within You*. "I was at that time a believer in violence. Reading it cured me of my scepticism and made me a firm believer in Ahimsa."

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It was not Tolstoy's writings alone, but the example of his life —his passion for truth and ceaseless striving after perfection, that enthroned him in Gandhiji's heart and led him later to describe himself as "a humble follower of that great leader whom I have long looked upon as one of my guides". In him he found a kindred spirit— a single-minded seeker after truth; an aristocrat turned peasant and shoemaker in pursuit of the meaning of life, who dedicated his wealth and talents and genius to the service of humanity while he himself strove to live by his body labour; a born idealist, who had passed through the purgatory of unbelief and a sensual way of life before he found redemption in the saving power of truth; an intrepid soldier-in-arms who, having distinguished himself by his courage on the battlefield, demonstrated in his own person the still higher possibility of setting at nought the mightiest despotism with the help of the weapon of the spirit only; a consummate artist, with a creative power that could almost rival nature's, who renounced art to devote himself to bridging the hiatus between religion on the one hand and the economic, political and social sciences on the other so as to restore to spirituality its sanction and to the run-away nineteenth century sciences the sense of direction and meaning in terms of life which they had all but lost. Finally, Gandhiji found in him a pioneer of the science of the spirit, who had divined the potentiality of the principle of non-resistance and had thus discovered an instrument of social action which he was to make his own and put to use with such striking success.

After settling in Natal Gandhiji read more of his books—*What Shall We Do Then? Gospels in Brief, The Four Gospels Harmonized and Translated,* besides several other writings. As a result, he says, he began "to realise more and more the infinite possibilities of universal love". Tolstoy's teachings penetrated the very core and matrix of his being. They presented in modern garb, some of the great truths proclaimed by India's ancient seers. What is more, Tolstoy pointed out to him the application of these truths to the removal of the various political and social ills that afflict modern society, and the basic rules governing such application. So deeply was his thinking impregnated with Tolstoy's that the changes that took place in his way of life and thinking in the years that followed can be correctly understood and appreciated only in the context of the master's life and philosophy. It coloured his views not only on life and religion but on economic, social and political questions as well. Under its impact India's ancient spiritual truths became to him instinct with a new meaning and provided him with ready-made formulas that he needed in order further to refine the science that the master had propounded and to develop techniques for its extended application.

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2

The youngest but one of the five children of Count Nikolai Ilyich, Leo Tolstoy was born on August 28 (new style September 9), 1828. He lost his mother when he was hardly three years old. Six years later his father died. He was in consequence brought up by an aunt—a very pious lady herself—who held that nothing helped more to form a youth's character than a liaison with a married woman; and she saw to it that this side of her nephew's character-building did not suffer.

Leo took life very seriously. One of his earliest childhood recollections was of a fantasy that filled his beloved elder brother Nikolai's imagination about the advent of a kind of Golden Age on earth, when there would be no more disease, no human suffering, and no anger. He possessed a secret, Nikolai had solemnly told his brothers which, if it became generally known, would make all men happy—all would become Ant Brothers, and love one another. The chief secret which, however, he did not disclose, he said, was written on a "green stick" which he had buried somewhere by the edge of a ravine in a forest. By its means all men would become "everlastingly happy". The Tolstoy children, under his leadership, even organised a game of Ant Brotherhood, when "cuddled together in the dark under shawl-covered chairs and boxes the Ant Brotherhood felt particular tenderness for each other". This, Tolstoy later recorded, was his first childhood experience of love, "not love of some one person, but love of love".[1] His passion for self-improvement and attainment of perfection never slackened. At seventy, in his *Recollections*, he wrote:

> . . . As I then believed that there was a little green stick whereon was written something which would destroy all evil in men and give them great blessings, so I now believe that such truth exists among people and will be revealed to them and will give them what it promises.[2]

Matriculating from the Kazan University at the age of sixteen he joined the faculty of Oriental languages, but took no degree, and in 1847 left the university with only a General Certificate of law. About this time, while undergoing treatment in the public clinic at Kazan for venereal disease, which he had "from that source whence it is customarily obtained", he met a Buriyut Lama from Russian Mongolia with whom he exchanged ideas on Buddhism. He was then nineteen.

Determined to educate himself and manage his estate and serfs in a progressive manner he settled at his family estate at Yasnaya Polyana, but without any success. In 1851, fired by the ambition to win military distinction, he enlisted as a *junker*, "gentleman volunteer", in an artillery unit, received his commission three years later, and

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was posted at Sevastopol during the Crimean War. He remained there till the end of the siege, distinguishing himself at the Fourth Bastion, with the enemy lines scarcely two hundred yards away, by remarkable courage in the face of danger and death.

A series of stories and sketches that he wrote, descriptive of life during the siege of Sevastopol, attracted the attention of the Czar Alexander II, who sent an order, to "guard well the life of that young man".[3]

In 1857 he resigned from the army and passed three winters (1857-59) in Moscow. The publication of his book *Childhood* had already won him fame as a rising literary star. Lionised by the literary men of his day, who furnished him with a theory to justify the looseness of his morals, he surrendered himself completely to the life of a society dandy; plunged headlong into the whirlpool of riotous living that was in fashion among the members of the literary fraternity of the time; busied himself with gymnastic exercises in the afternoon; and in the evening, donning a dress suit and white tie, attended evening parties and balls, "painting the town red" with "carousals, gipsies and cards the whole night long".

In the same year he went abroad and again in 1860. Returning home with his faith in perfection and in progress confirmed as a result of his sojourn in Europe, where he met many eminent scholars, he accepted a magistracy, introduced by the Emancipation Act of 1861 for the settling of land disputes between the squires and their former serfs, started a school for peasant children, based on his belief in the "superior values of their natural lights to the artificial standards of civilisation", and set about to practise his own theories of education. But before long he gave up both magistracy and school.

During the decade before he settled in Yasnaya Polyana, he tells us in his *Confession*, he "committed every crime in the calendar and yet was regarded by all as a comparatively moral man".[4] An execution that he witnessed in Paris during his sojourn in Europe shook his faith in the infallibility of progress and marked the turning point in his frivolous society life. In September 1860 the death, practically in his arms, due to the habit of excessive drinking, of his brother Nikolay, whom he worshipped and who worshipped him in return, brought him to the verge of an inner crisis. "Nothing in my life has made such an impression upon me," he wrote, referring to his brother's death in a letter to his friend Fet, the Russian poet:

> He (my brother) was right when he said that there is nothing worse than death. . . . A few minutes before his death he had dozed off, and suddenly he awoke and in terror whispered: 'What is this?' He had seen it, his absorption into nothingness. And if he did not find anything to hold on to, what shall I find? Still less. . . .[5]

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Tennyson has sung:

> Truth for truth, and good for good, the Good, the True, the Pure, the Just,
> Take the charm 'For ever' from them, and they crumble into dust.

Wealth, genius, fame and all the satisfaction that these can procure, Tolstoy suddenly found, meant nothing to him. He wanted eternity.

> What is the use of anything, if tomorrow shall begin the torments of death with all the abomination of the lie, the self-deception, and will end in nothing, in a naught for ourselves. . . . Be useful, be virtuous and happy so long as you are alive, people say to one another; but you, and happiness, and virtue, and usefulness consist in truth. And the truth which I have brought away in thirty-two years is this, that the condition in which we are placed is terrible. . . . As soon as man shall have reached the highest degree of development, he will see clearly that everything is confusion and deception.[6]

The crisis was, however, postponed for 15 long years by his marriage in September 1862 to Sophia Behrs, a girl 16 years younger than himself. It was a period full of domestic happiness and intense literary activity for him, during which he produced such masterpieces as *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*.

In 1873, after eleven years of married life, death for the first time struck at the Tolstoy family. His son Peter suddenly died. The death of his aunt Tatyana occurred soon afterwards, followed by the deaths in quick succession of two more children and another aunt whom he loved dearly. He became dissatisfied with the aimless, prosperous life he was leading. Tormented by his questioning turn of mind he began to subject himself to a close, relentless introspection, and developed a sudden aversion for art which he denounced as "a beautiful lie".[7] Filled with disgust for his unjust, fleshy way of life, he set about to discover an answer to the problem of existence with a passionate sincerity that has seldom been equalled.

Having been brought "to the verge of suicide and despair", he says, he looked around at the living humanity and found that despair was not the common lot of men. He saw all about him men who lived by faith and derived from it a meaning of life "which gave them strength to live and die quietly and joyfully". He could not explain that meaning through reason. He, therefore, tried with all his heart and soul to live like orthodox believers, even to the extent of performing the external rites of worship, hoping that in that way the secret of their "strong lucid, unassailable faith" would be revealed to him. He began to cultivate the acquaintance of common people, visited monastries, mixed with pilgrims and attended the church. The more he mixed with them the more he was struck by two things. On the one

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hand was revealed to him a meaning of life which more and more satisfied him and "which was not destroyed by death", on the other hand he found that "in that external confession of faith there was much deception", which the masses because of their ignorance, mental inertia and preoccupation with the struggle for life failed to see. But he could not help seeing it, and having once beheld it he could not shut his eyes to it.

He no longer doubted that in the Christian teaching was the truth of life. Where did the lie end then and the truth begin? To investigate the doctrine, which he wanted to make his own, he began to study books on theology. He was led to the conviction that the faith that the organised church professed and propagated was "not only a lie but an immoral deception" and the Church, as a body of men laying claim to the exclusive possession of truth, was "the chief obstacle to Christ's teaching being understood by the people". Working hand-in-hand with the State, the Church thanked God for the slaughter of men, organised prayers for the destruction of the enemy and rejoiced in military victory whereas the clear injunction of Christ was "Thou Shalt Not Kill." This Commandment the Church tried to distort and explain away. For the doctrine of the Kingdom of God on earth by the practice of universal love, it substituted the superstition that salvation could be found in following the church ritual of baptism, communion and partaking of the Eucharist as a "symbol of atonement of the world's sins through the vicarious suffering of Christ". The source of all the love, goodness and patience that he had observed in the masses, he concluded, was not in the teaching of the Church but in Christianity itself, as taught in the Gospels.

He renounced the Church, declared that the "organised Church was the greatest enemy of true Christianity", taught himself Hebrew and Greek and began an intensive study of the Gospels in the original in order to discover the true meaning of Christ's teaching which the Church had tried to obfuscate. The work occupied him for the next ten years (1879-1888). During this period he completed his famous book *My Confession* (1879-82). "One of the noblest and most courageous utterances of man, the outpouring of a soul perplexed in the extreme by life's great problem",[8] it contains a complete account of his conversion. In its absolute candour and sincerity of self-revelation it set the pattern that Gandhiji was later to follow in *My Experiments With Truth*. The decisive stage in his conversion was reached, he says, when he realised that the whole message of Christ was contained in his precept, "Resist not Evil" (Matthew 5.39). "Suddenly, for the first time, I understood the version in the simplest fashion. I understood that Christ only says what he says." It became the foundation of the creed that has become associated with his name.

He followed it up by *Criticism of Dogmatic Theology* (1880-82), *The*

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Four Gospels Harmonized and Translated (1881-82) and *My Religion or What I Believe* (1884)—all of them marked by a burning sincerity, insight, and power of penetration that made the theological polemics of his critics sound like "sounding brass and tinkling cymbals" in comparison.

His outspoken criticism of the established church, his denunciation of State violence and his plea for the abolition of capital punishment as a negation of the Christ's teaching alarmed the State authorities. His book *My Religion* was prohibited as soon as it was published. His appeal to the Czar's successor to pardon the culprits after the assassination of Czar Alexander II by the Nihilists in 1881 led to more and more rigid censorship being imposed on his writings. His influence, however, spread wider, the more his writings were suppressed.

3

His work in connection with a Census Commission in 1881 brought Tolstoy face to face with the social misery in the slums of Moscow and caused him to ask indignantly, what right had "a few like us" to enjoy the luxuries of life while thousands of human beings were condemned by the existing social system to live without any hope of escape from filth and destitution? It is "a crime not committed once but constantly", he exclaimed, "and ... I with my luxury not merely tolerate it but share in it".[9] He was overwhelmed by the wretchedness he saw around him. But what struck him even more was the expression of deep distrust and resentment that he invariably met in the glances of all those with whom he tried to enter into conversation with a view to alleviate their destitution.

At first he could not understand this. Slowly, however, the truth became clear to him that the existence of these tens of thousands of men condemned to suffering and starvation while "I with...thousands gorge myself on fillet and sturgeon and cover the floors and horses with stuffs and carpets"[10] were the obverse and reverse of the same coin. In his *What Shall We Do Then?* (1886) he presented the conclusion which he had arrived at after much inner suffering: The cause of the pauperism of the poor was in the idleness of the rich. The non-working city dweller first freed himself from the obligation of body labour, which is nature's law, and then by devious ways appropriated from the primary producer in the village the fruits of his labour and transferred the same to the city, where with his reckless luxury he tempted and corrupted those who were obliged to follow in his track to retrieve from his table a few crumbs out of what they had in the first instance been despoiled of. In due course, looking at the "free, easy, elegant and well-guarded life" of the idle rich, they also wanted to arrange their life in such a way "as to work least and enjoy

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most the labour of others". Robbed, corrupted and demoralised they sank deeper and deeper into servitude.

He now understood the reason of the distrust and resentment of the poor in respect of the philanthropy of the rich. Before he could do any good to them it was clear that he must cease to fleece them and he must not tempt them as he had been doing. He had been dreadfully deluded in thinking that by taking thousands with one hand from the poor and "flinging kopeks back to those to whom he took a fancy", he was doing "good" to them.

> I am sitting on a man's neck, choking him, and demanding that he carry me, and without getting off him, I assure myself and others that I am very sorry for him and want to alleviate his condition by all possible means except by getting off his neck.[11]

It was as if "a louse that devours the leaf of a tree" wanted "to be instrumental in the growth and health of this tree".[12] If he had six hundred thousand roubles and gave one hundred thousand roubles, he reasoned, he would still fail to be in a situation where it was possible to do good, because he would still have five hundred thousand roubles left. "Only when I shall have nothing left shall I be able to do a little good."[13]

The same applied to organised philanthropy. Attempts of the upper class to ameliorate the condition of the poor by distribution of charity were bound to appear to them as a sham and a cruel mockery so long as the former continued to lead a life of privileged ease obtained at their expense.

> I came to this simple and natural conclusion that, if I pitied that worn-out horse which I was riding, the first thing I ought to do, if I really was sorry for it, was to get off and walk.[14]

Individual and organised philanthropy, he realised, could not solve the problem of destitution, for in money itself, in the possession of money, was the chief cause of the poverty that he saw around him. What was money? His investigation into the nature of money showed to him that money represented the labour not usually of the one who owned it but "lien" on the labour of men who worked, by which the person who owned money could without having worked himself, compel others to work for him. Therefore any use of money for the purchase of articles for the relief of the destitutes was "nothing but presenting an obligation against the poor, or at least passing it for presentation to some one else".

Once he had understood this the absurdity of his former attempts to alleviate the misery of the poor by his philanthropy became plain to him; he was trying to help the poor by drawing upon the poor. It was a contradiction in terms he saw, to help others, and those very men who were supporting him, by doling out money which he

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had not earned by his own labour. "I stood up to my ears in mud and was trying to pull others out of it."[15]

To do good and to give money, he saw, were not only not the same but as a matter of fact two entirely different and generally opposite things : "Money is in itself an evil and so he who gives money gives an evil." The delusion that giving money means doing good was due to this, that "for the most part a man who does good rids himself of the evil and at the same time of his money. And so giving money is only a sign that man is beginning to rid himself of evil".

He denounced money as the modern form of slavery under which the poor man, who has no money to pay taxes or to buy bread, is made the common slave of all the rich.

> If he refuses I will not give him any money for his taxes, and they will flog him until he submits . . . because he has neither land nor bread. And if I make him work without food, above his strength, if I kill him with work, no one will say a word to me. . . . *Money is a new and terrible form of slavery, and like the old form of personal slavery, it corrupts both the slave and the slave-owner, but it is even much worse, because it frees the slave and the slave-owner from personal human relations.*[16]

What was then the solution? He found it contained in the answer given by John the Baptist to the question "What shall we do then".[17] "Not to have more than one garment, and not to have money, that is, not to make use of the labour of others, and so first of all to do with our hands what we are able to do." And it was an illiterate Russian peasant, V. K. Syuteyev, who had brought this home to him.

"It is all useless, nothing will come out of your enterprise," Syuteyev said to him, when he unfolded to him his plan of removal of destitution by philanthropy.

"Why?" Tolstoy incredulously asked, thinking that perhaps he had failed to explain his plan properly. Was it wrong to feed the hungry as the Gospel commanded?

"I know, I know. . . . But you are not doing that. . . . A man asks you for twenty kopeks. You give it to him. Is that charity? . . . It only means that you have got rid of him. Give him spiritual charity."

Were the destitutes then to be allowed to die of hunger and cold? Tolstoy persisted.

There was no need, the peasant-philosopher answered. "Let us divide them (the paupers) among us. . . . You take one and I'll take one. We could go to work together. He will see how I work and will learn how to live; and we shall sit at one table, and he will hear a word now from me, now from you. That is charity."[18]

The only way to improve the condition of the destitutes, Tolstoy realised, was to go to work with them and teach them by precept and

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personal example how to live a simple, happy, contended life by one's honest industry. To do good we must first find out what is good for a man, and for this

we must get into human, that is, amicable, relations with him. And so, to do good it is not money that is needed, but first of all, the ability at least for a time to renounce the conventionalities of our life, not to be afraid to soil our boots and garments, nor to be afraid of bed bugs and lice, nor of typhoid, diphtheria, or smallpox; we must be able to sit down on the cot of a ragged fellow and talk with him so intimately that he will feel that the talker respects and loves him, and is not acting and admiring himself.[19]

This the upper classes were prevented from doing by their way of life which they were not prepared to renounce. Their excuse was that they had freed themselves from the universal human obligation of participation in the struggle for existence to serve progress. This was a lie but they lacked the courage to look the facts in the face and so had accepted the lie as truth. They had specialised, they had their special functional activity, they were the "brains" of the people, they were therefore entitled to be fed, clothed and provided all comforts by the labour of others—so argued the high-priests of science and art. Without this division of labour there would have been no progress. True, answered Tolstoy, division of labour had always existed and would probably always exist in human society but society had a right to insist that the division should be a fair one.

Science and art had contributed to human progress not because their servants had in the name of a false division of labour emancipated themselves from the duty of physical work and were able to ride on the backs of the toilers, but inspite of it—"because there were men of genius who, not availing themselves of that opportunity, moved humanity forward."[20] The class of the learned and of artists who, under the pretext of a false division of labour and under the promise to serve the people spiritual food, demanded the right to be maintained in comfort and luxury on the labour of others could not contribute to the success of true science and true art, "for falsehood cannot produce truth".[21]

Far from increasing the well-being of mankind, emancipation of men of art or science from the law of body-labour for sustaining life had divorced scientific and artistic activity from human values and tended to turn it into an "idle and harmful plaything".[22]

Service of the people by sciences and arts will only exist when men live with the people and as the people live, and without presenting any claims will offer their scientific and artistic services, which the people will be free to accept or decline as they please.[23]

No matter what a man's calling or avocation in life might be,

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said Tolstoy, his "first and most unquestionable" duty lies in his "participation in the struggle with Nature" for the purpose of supporting his own life and that of other men.[24] Before we can improve a man we have to preserve his life.

Love cannot be stupid. As love for one man would not let us read novels to him who was starving, or hang costly earrings on him who was naked, so love for mankind will not let us serve it by amusing the well-fed while we leave the cold and hungry to die of want.

True love, love not merely in words but in deeds, cannot be stupid—it is the one thing giving true perception and wisdom.

And, therefore, a man penetrated by love will not make a mistake, but will be sure to do first what love of man first requires; he will do what maintains the life of the hungry, the cold and the heavy-laden, and *that* is all done by a direct struggle with Nature.[25]

To hold, therefore, that by exempting ourselves from the law of body labour in order to engage in artistic activity we are serving others is, to say the least, irrational.

"But this is to reject or at any rate restrict the definition of science and art," the dilettante set objected. Tolstoy joined issue with his critics : Science and art are as indispensable for men as food, and drink and raiment, and even more indispensable than these, but only when they are linked to, and help man to attain, the highest good of life. So vast and various is the domain of knowledge, he pointed out, that man would be lost in its vastness unless there was a clue for determining the relative importance of its various branches—what should come first and what afterwards.

Ever since humanity began to exist, there had always among all nations appeared teachers who had tried to build this science—the "base and starting point" of all arts and sciences, viz., the science which deals with the knowledge of what is most essential to men, "the destiny and therefore the true welfare of each man and of mankind".[26] This science had served as a "guiding thread" in the definition of the meaning of all other knowledge and in its expression—art.[27]

All mankind had asked itself the question : "How shall I harmonise my demands for the good of my personal life with my conscience or my reason, which demand the common good of men?" And from the answer to this question there had slowly but uninterruptedly flowed new life conceptions which brought men nearer to the demands of reason and conscience.

And so in all ages true art had no meaning "except as an expression about the destiny and the good of man",[28] it had served the teaching about life, "what later was called religion".

When the place of the science about the destiny and good of men was usurped by the science in the sense of "knowledge, about everything

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that might come to one's mind", science lost its direction and meaning.

"Humanity is an organism and its evolution is governed by the law of progress," argued the men of science so-called. Tolstoy was not to be stormed by high-sounding words. The Chinese had no "progress" but they were highly civilised. The Europeans had tried to advance progress by means of cannon balls and gun powder. Was this the mark of civilisation? It was only the upper classes, who were benefited by it, that made a fetish of progress. The masses of the people neither asked for nor had much use for progress so-called.

If humanity be an organism, as the high-priests of progress maintained, Tolstoy returned to the charge, then the activity of each part must fit into and subserve the good of all humanity or of society. Modern science and art did not satisfy this test. The reason why they had not fulfilled, and could not fulfil, their calling was that they had not fulfilled their obligations; because for obligations they had substituted rights, whereas the scientific and artistic activity "in its real meaning is fruitful only when it knows no rights, but only obligations".[29]

"It is just because its property is to be self-sacrificing," he went on to say, "that humanity values it (art) so highly". Those who are really called to serve others by means of spiritual labour, i.e., art, will, therefore,

always suffer in fulfilling this ministration because only in suffering, as in childbirth, is the spiritual world born. Self-renunciation and suffering will be the share of the thinker and the artist, because his aim is the good of men. Men are unhappy: they suffer, they perish. There is no time for waiting and taking things coolly.

The thinker and artist will never sit on Olympian heights, as we are accustomed to think; he will always, eternally, be agitated and disturbed.[30]

He would be agitated and disturbed because of the ever present feeling that

he might have solved and uttered that which would give the good to men and would free them from suffering, but he did not solve and utter this, and tomorrow it may be too late; he may be dead.

Not he will be a thinker and an artist who is educated in an establishment, where they make a scholar and an artist . . . and receives a diploma and a competency; but he who would be glad to refrain from thinking and expressing what is implanted in his soul, and yet is unable to refrain from doing that toward which he is drawn by two insuperable forces—by his inner necessity and by the demands of men.[31]

Such a person will not take to art or science for the sake of popularity, fame or riches, but because he feels impelled irresistibly to dedicate himself to the avocation of his choice to serve humanity.

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There is no such thing as a smooth, easy-going and self-satisfied thinker and artist.

The spiritual activity and its expression . . . are man's most grievous calling, his cross. . . . The only undoubted sign of the presence of the calling is self-renunciation, self-sacrifice for the purpose of manifesting the force which is implanted in man for the benefit of other men.

It might be possible to teach the facts of physical science, "to teach how many bugs there are in the world, and to observe the spots in the sun", or to provide cheap entertainment by producing movies or operas without experiencing any suffering, but

it is impossible without renunciation to teach people their good, which is all only in self-renunciation and serving others, and strongly to express this teaching. . . .

'There were golden priests and wooden bowls, now the bowls have become of gold, and the priests are wooden,' say the people.

There was good reason why Christ died on the cross, and good reason why the sacrifice of suffering conquers everything.[32]

True science and true art have two undoubted signs—the first, an inward sign, is this, that the servant of science and of art will carry out his calling not for his advantage, but with self-renunciation; and the second, an external one, is this, that its productions are comprehensible to all men whose good he has in view.[33]

Art, science, literature and all the social activities, therefore, had to become unified in, and derive their meaning from, religion. They had a justification for existing only if they complied with the basal demand of religion which is to help man to determine his relation to the Cause of causes and therethrough with his fellows. "When in the enthronement of all of them not one human being shall suffer physically, morally, or mentally, then there will arrive the time when they will perform the functions which are proper to them, but not until then".[34] To the extent that they departed from this all embracing and unifying law and served men for selfish ends they were all to be condemned.

The principle of the highest good of man as the sole basis of all artistic activity and the immanent factor in its organisation became the starting point of the aesthetic theory that Tolstoy finally elaborated in his book *What is Art?*

What then were such people, who had seen the lie but were handicapped by their circumstances, to do?

The answer was in the first place not to lie to others or to themselves; in other words, not to be afraid of the truth. They must not invent excuses or accept those invented by others for the purpose of concealing from themselves the "deductions of reason and of con-

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science", no matter where this might take them. Firm in the belief that the position to which truth and conscience may lead us, however fantastic it may appear, cannot be worse than the one which is based on the lie, they must not be afraid to stand alone by their conviction against the whole world. Above all, they must be prepared to retrace their steps once they had discovered that they were on the wrong path.

If a man, having strayed on a false path, recognises it as the true one, every step of his on his path removes him from his goal; if a man, who for a long time walks on this false path, divines himself or is told that this is a false path, and is frightened at the idea of how far he has strayed to one side, and tries to assure himself that he will in some way come out on the road, he certainly never will. If a man is awed by truth, and, seeing it, does not acknowledge it, accepts the lie as truth, he will never know what he has to do.[35]

In addition to not lying to themselves, to find the correct answer to the question "what to do", they had to repent in the truest sense of the word because, unless they sincerely repented and renounced the false valuation which they had made of themselves they would not see the greater part of the lie on which their life was based and of which they had to purge themselves. So long as he had regarded himself as a "special" man, a man of "talent, culture and genius" the question that he had asked himself was, "How can I, such a fine author, who have acquired so much knowledge, and so many talents, use them for the benefit of men?" The question had been incorrectly put and could not yield the right answer, because in putting the question itself, he in fact had decided in advance the kind of agreeable activity with which he was called to serve men. His question should have been, what he must do, "after having lived a parasitic life of selfish ease by the toil of others, and made himself unaccustomed to work", to pay back those who had fed and clothed him and even now continued to feed and clothe him. Instead of regarding himself as a benefactor of the masses he had to recognise in him "an absolutely guilty, spoilt and useless man", who desired not to benefit but to make belated and partial amends to the masses, whom he had wronged and insulted.[36]

The moment he saw this clearly all his difficulties vanished; he was "startled" by "ease and simplicity" of the solution of all the questions which before had seemed so difficult and so complicated.[37] The final answer that he obtained to the question, "What are we to do", was that one possesses no rights but only obligations and duties. Property was the chief cause of the suffering, degradation and strife in the world. Until that time came when people could relinquish all right to private property and to the possession of money—rights for which they depend-

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ed on force—they must consume as little as possible the labour of others. They must simplify their life, bring down their wants to the level of the peasant, and themselves look after everything they needed for their support—their stove, their samovar, their water, their clothes —in short everything that they could not do without. Above all they must grow food with their own hands, and make other people see the unfairness and inhumanity of their privileged position, whether based on wealth, education or special talent. If they had any time and strength left after this, they must try to serve the needs of others.

There were only two ways open before the privileged class, he wrote in the *Afterword* to his *Account* of the famine in the Government of Tula in 1891-1892. They could say that they meant to keep the privileges and advantages they held, even at the cost of the blood and tears of the poor, or they should cease to lie, repent and alter their way of life. They must realise that "every glass of wine, every bit of sugar, butter or meat, is so much food taken from the people, and so much labour added to their task".[38] Having realised this they must renounce the advantages they possessed, and having renounced them stand on an equal footing with the people and together with them obtain those blessings which they had so far, without consulting their wish, sought to supply them with from outside, "with pence that have first been wrung from the people at the cost of pain and suffering".[39]

At first he had been afraid that the execution of this plan would seem strange to the people and mark him out as an eccentric. The "strangeness", to his agreeable surprise, lasted only a week. After that it would have appeared strange to him and to others if he had returned to his former condition.

He had feared he would be depriving himself of the possibility of literary activity if he took to a life of body labour. What actually happened was that physical work encouraged and improved the quality of his mental work.

Equally unexpected was the reply that he obtained to the stock question : What difference would an insignificant drop—the participation of his personal physical labour—make in the ocean of labour that he absorbed? He had only to make physical labour a habitual condition of his life, he found, for the majority of his false and expensive habits and needs acquired during his physical idleness to fall away from him without the slightest effort. "In proportion as my labour became more fruitful, my demands of other people's labour became less and less, and life naturally without effort and without privations approached that simple life of which I could not even have dreamed without fulfilling the law of labour."[40] Contrary to the views of noted physicians, the unaccustomed hard physical work instead of undermining his health made him feel "stronger, fresher, happier and better".[41]

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By a remarkable *tour-de-force* of his formidable intellect, he anticipated the various objections of his critics and exposed the utter fallacy, unreality and insincerity of their special pleading. To the objection that this would be merely tinkering with the historical process by which society is governed, and it would be ridiculous for men of importance to society—ministers, senators, and academicians, artists and scientists—to waste their time cleaning their shirts, digging and ploughing to the neglect of their high calling, his answer was that it is just in "infinitesimal variations in men's consciousness" that great external changes originate. "Great, true acts are always simple and modest." The acts which would solve the contradictions in the midst of which they lived were just these "modest, imperceptible, apparently ridiculous acts : ministering to ourselves, physical labour for ourselves, and if possible, for others. They are incumbent on us, the rich, if we comprehend the misfortune . . . and danger of the situation into which we have fallen".[42]

To those who asked what would come of it if two or three dozen men made this change in their life, he said:

> What will happen will be this: A dozen, two, three dozen men will, without coming into conflict with any one, without any governmental or revolutionary violence, solve for themselves the apparently insoluble question which is standing before the whole world, and will solve it in such a way that . . . the evil of oppression will no longer be terrible to them; other people will see that the good, for which they are searching everywhere, is here close to them . . . that, instead of being afraid of men who surround them, it is necessary to come nearer to them and love them.[43]

To the excuse, what would one man do in a crowd which did not agree with him, Tolstoy's withering reply was that nothing showed more the unrighteousness of those who made it. If in a team of tow-men pulling a boat upstream a tow-man refused to do the pulling because he was unable by himself to tow the boat up the river, he would set himself down either as a stupid or a dishonest hand. Every tow-man knows that he must not take his hands off the tow-rope but must pull at it in the direction opposite to the current. What is true of the tow-men is equally true of all humanity. Each man knows that he must pull in the direction indicated by the master in the faith that others also will be prompted to do the same as he has been doing.

> For this the same intellect has been given to men that the direction might be always one and the same. This direction is given so obviously, so indubitably, in the whole life of all men about us, and in the conscience of every individual man, and in the whole expression of men's wisdom, that only he who does not want to work can say that he does not see it.[44]

To the final question, "What will come of it", his reply was:

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This, that one or two men will pull; looking at them a third man will join them, and so the best men will join them until the matter will advance and go as though pushing and inviting those who do not understand what is being done and for what purpose.

The men who consciously work for the fulfilment of the law of God will at first be joined by men who semi-consciously, taking things half on faith, recognise the same thing; then they will be joined by a large number of men who recognise the same through their faith in the representative men, and, finally, the majority of men will recognise the same, and then all men will stop ruining themselves and will find happiness.[45]

For a man who had thus learnt to regard work as the business and joy of his life, the meaning of his life would lie "in labour, and not in its results, nor in the acquisition of property". He would not seek any alleviation of his labour through the work of others. As he acquired skill, agility and endurance he would be eager to do more and more work. He would not care what instruments of labour he used. Though he would naturally always choose the most productive instruments of labour he would get the same satisfaction from work even if he worked with his bare hands. "If there is a steam plough, he will plough with it; if there is none, . . . he will use a wooden plough; and if not that, he will dig with a spade, and under all conditions will he equally attain his aim, which is to pass his life in work useful to men, and so he will derive from it his full satisfaction."[46]

The condition of such a man, whether as regards the security of material conditions or inner peace and joy would be better than his who devotes his life to the acquisition of property.[47]

Prophetically he warned that the patience of the masses on whose backs they had ridden so long was being exhausted. No matter how they tried to ignore the plain writing on the wall, the peril to which the blind selfishness of the wealthy class had exposed them was drawing nearer and nearer.

> This danger is growing with every day and with every hour and . . . now it has matured so much that we with difficulty hold ourselves in our boat over the agitated sea, which is about to swamp us and angrily to swallow and devour us. The (workers') revolution with terrors of destructions and murders, has not only been threatening us, but we have been living on it for thirty years and so far we have with all kinds of cunning devices managed for a time to postpone its eruption. Such is the state of Europe; such is the state with us, and it is even worse with us, because it has no safety-valves.
>
> Among our masses there has in the last three or four years come into general use a new, significant word; this word, which I had never heard before, they now use opprobriously in the streets and define us as 'drones'.
>
> The hatred and contempt of the oppressed masses are growing and the

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physical and moral forces of the wealthy classes are weakening; the deception, by means of which everything is holding itself, is being worn out, and the wealthy classes can no longer console themselves by anything in this mortal peril.

It is impossible to return to the old conditions; it is impossible to renew the destroyed prestige; there is but one thing left to do for those who do not wish to change their lives, and that is, to hope that things will suffice for their life, and afterward let it be as it may.

Even so does the blind crowd of the wealthy classes do; but the peril is growing all the time, and the terrible catastrophe is coming nearer.[48]

Their self-interest, no less than moral and ethical considerations, required that those belonging to the upper class should change their way of living and fulfil man's o ligation "to make use of the hands and feet given him for the purpose for which they are given to him, and to use the devoured food for work which is productive of this food, and not to let them become atrophied, not . . . use them only for the purpose of shoving food, drink, and cigarettes into the mouth".[49]

The time was not far off, he predicted, when the "enlightened" set and following them the mass of men would not "consider it a shame to clean privies, and yet not a shame to fill them and let people, their brothers, clean them; . . . not shame, to eat bread and yet not to know how to set it; a shame to have dirty hands and not a shame not to have calloused hands". Public opinion would demand this. This would be "when in the minds of men will be destroyed the offences which concealed the truth from them". Already public opinion had moved perceptibly in that direction. But more yet needed to be done. "The offence which justifies the power of money over men need be destroyed, and public opinion will change as to what is praiseworthy and what disgraceful and life will change with it. . . . This offence is transparent now and barely veils the truth."[50] Mankind was "inevitably and rapidly" marching to such a view. They were standing on the borderland of the new life-conception and its confirmation was only a question of very little time.

Reading Tolstoy's *What Shall We Do Then?* gave to Gandhiji's religious thinking a definite social colouring. Criticism has since been levelled, echoing Lenin's view, that while Tolstoy in many respects diagnosed the disease correctly, he prescribed an "incantation" for a cure. Such ignorant criticism would have found little favour with the Mahatma, who never wearied of pointing out that before one could help the poor one must first get off their backs and learn to earn one's bread with the sweat of one's face; that only by changing one's own life can one change others; and that a man who says that he would change his way of life only when all were converted is either a hypocrite or a self-deluded fool. Gandhiji was deeply influenced, too, by Tolstoy's views on art and science and on progress, propounded

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long before Edward Carpenter had declared modern civilisation to be a disease, and his dictum that working with one's hands to meet one's physical needs is the beginning and essential test of a good and religious life. Tolstoy's criticism of the professions found a strong echo in Gandhiji's *Indian Home Rule* many years later. In the trust deed of the Phoenix Settlement, which became the forerunner and prototype of his Ashrams in India, one of the objects set down was the practice and propagation of Tolstoy's ideals. For the instruction of the Gujarati section of the South African Indian community he published an adaptation in Gujarati of Tolstoy's parable *Ivan the Fool* under the caption *Moorakh Raj Ane Tena Be Bhaio*, and when he established a community settlement for Indian passive resisters during his South African Satyagraha struggle, he named it after the Russian teacher.

4

His conversion led Tolstoy to adopt a new mode of life. He began to dress and live like a peasant; stopped taking the help of the servants; swept and cleaned his own room, his clothes and his shoes; even emptied his chamber-pot. In winter he chopped firewood and stacked it; went forth, while it was still dark, to fetch water from the well for the household, lugging barrels of icy water to the kitchen in a sledge. He learnt boot-making from a cobbler of his acquaintance, became an expert in it, and even persuaded his daughters to wear shoes of his make.

Developing a strong aversion to the use of money, he often travelled third class on the railroad, and on one occasion journeyed 130 miles from Moscow to Yasnaya Polyana, "walking down the road—a nameless old man, dressed in peasant clothes, with a rough stick in hand, . . . making new acquaintances and talking endlessly to the people he met". These journeys brought him great solace. "The entire world of God opened before him, far beyond the limit of the conventions within which the great writer, Count Tolstoy, was forced to live."[51] His trips to Yasnaya Polyana, "the baths in the country life", as he called them, became more and more a spiritual necessity to him, like the Mahatma's visits later to his Ashram to "recharge the body battery" and "turn the searchlight inward to see where I stand".

As a part of his plan for the simple life Tolstoy gave up hunting (1884), drinking and eating meat (1887), and tobacco (1888) after a hard struggle and many a set back—and finally tea (1892).

To the annoyance of his wife, he would not eat white bread and took to a regimen of porridge and boiled vegetables, which occasionally brought on attacks of flatulence. When a dear relation of his came to stay with him and wanted chicken, she found next morning a live bird tied to her armchair with a knife on her table and a note saying

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that if she could not do without chicken, she must slaughter it herself; no one in the household was willing to do it.

As far back as 1881 he had started taking part in the physical work of the peasants. On his Yasnaya Polyana estate, he joined his peasants, who worked on a half-share basis, in community mowing—working now with one team then with another and leaving them the grass he had cut. Gradually he began to plough and harrow, frequently helping peasant families, who were short of labour, in working their own land. Sometimes he performed all the farm operations for a poor widow who was too poor to engage hired labour.

No labour was too menial for him. He would be seen carting manure on his estate, hauling logs, sawing timber, fixing rafters on a hut, he was rebuilding—"sitting astride a top beam . . . his sleeves . . . rolled up, hair dishevelled, unbuttoned shirt showing his bare chest, a chisel stuck in his leather girdle, a saw hanging from his waist, and his greying beard shaking at each blow of the axe".[52]

He genuinely enjoyed physical labour. His enthusiasm infected his entire household. Young and old, men and women, formed groups and competed in mowing, "hacking awkwardly with their scythes, and cheerfully raising blisters in long hours of raking up the hay".[53] Even his wife, donning peasant dress of a sort, did her share along with the children and the governess.

The peasants of his estate recognised in him a sincere, serious, God's good man who worked for his "soul"—no *poseur*, like some of the wealthy eccentric landowners they knew, indulging in a whimsy. Still he was not satisfied as he felt that he did not have to support his entire family by his physical labour. Sometimes he even complained that his physical labour was "practically useless" because it was not "absolutely necessary".

As his fame as a writer and teacher of a new way of life spread, a number of Tolstoyan settlements sprang up in Russia and in several other countries, "Tolstoyism" became a cult, and a growing stream of visitors, "Tolstoyans in Russian blouses and with long beards", scientists without name, young writers, students, workmen, peasants, would-be disciples began to flock to him, from all over Russia and abroad, turning his house into an odd assortment of eccentrics and cranks. The "dark ones", as the Countess called them, became a sore ordeal to her—and on all accounts they were often a very difficult lot to get on with—but the Count found among them "kindred spirits".

A typical instance was that of a seventy-year old Swede with "long yellowish white hair", who had lived for 30 years in America and had been to China, Japan and India. He went about barefoot, slept on the floor, putting a bottle under his head for a pillow, and "preferred everything raw". A vegetarian, he abjured not only fish, meat, milk and eggs, but when the big samovar was brought in at the breakfast,

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he rose and like a prophet out of the pages of the Old Testament declaimed: "And you bow before that idol!" To take tea, he explained, was to be accessory to robbing their Chinese brethren, whose best lands were pre-empted by tea-plantations and who had nowhere to sow the essential grain of their daily bread. It was characteristic of Tolstoy—the samovar was immediately taken away. Her father, records his daughter Alexandra, "himself ceased to drink tea. In place of it he took barley coffee only", an example which the Mahatma later copied.

Tolstoy was so taken up by the theories of this Swede that he gave up milk and butter and decided to eat only raw food, but the experiment got short shrift, when it resulted in bringing on an attack of a violent colic pain and the Countess put her foot down. The Mahatma, too, when nearing his sixtieth year was led by one of his "Swedes" to launch on a similar experiment in raw food with even more serious consequences.

A character of a somewhat different type was Syuteyev, the peasant. Like Leo he had rejected the Church. He interpreted the Bible in his way, advocated a life based on love for one's fellow men and denial of the right of private property, and condemned all violence. He would not handle a rifle, as it "smelt of blood"; refused to pay taxes on principle and, when the authorities distrained his small property for non-payment, accepted the penalty without a murmur. Seeing his illustrious friend off to the station after a visit to him on one occasion he harnessed a horse to his wagon but refused to bring a whip as a matter of principle. While the two philosophers were absorbed in talking "heartily in a brotherly fashion" about the salvation of humanity, the horse wandered into a ravine, and the wagon turned over throwing them down on the ground! Though Syuteyev read with difficulty and could not write at all there was a "quiet, simple dignity" about him, and in his slow, peasant speech there was "an earthly wisdom and power of conviction" that deeply impressed everybody who heard him. Tolstoy took him to preach in some of the fashionable salons in Moscow, where he became all the rage. Even the Countess was full of praise. The influence of his idealist peasant friend on people, and over intellectuals, Tolstoy always maintained, was "greater and more important than of all the Russian savants and writers".[54]

This extreme partiality of Tolstoy for his "Swedes" and "Syuteyevs"—which seems to have been the common generic characteristic of saints in all climes and ages—was fully shared by the Mahatma. He too had his assortment of "Syuteyevs" and "Swedes", which provided an opportunity to wags sometimes to dub his Ashram as a "menagerie of faddists, cranks and mad men". But he swore by them as his "ultimate all-purposes reserve", and would rush back to them even cutting short his meeting with the Viceroy. The only knowledge

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and culture by which humanity has advanced, he always maintained, is that which springs from honest, conscientious and intelligent performance of whatever duty may come one's way, no matter how humble, rather than from book learning.

5

Following the suppression of *What I Believe or My Religion* the Russian Government, instead of having the book burnt, as ordered by the spiritual censor, had every copy seized and the book circulated in large numbers among high officials and other persons of its choice. Before long adverse comments on and refutations of a book, of whose very existence nobody was supposed to be aware, began to appear in the press through the complicity and encouragement of the officials. This aroused still further the public interest in the banned publication and brought Tolstoy a lot of information and literature on the theme of his book from correspondents from all parts of the world. He started studying everything ever written on the subject of non-resistance, became interested in the works of pacifists like William Lloyd Garrison and M. Adin Ballou (both from U.S.A.) and espoused the cause of the Doukhobors—a pacifist sect of Russian Christians, who refused military service on religious and conscientious grounds (1896). Police persecution of those who refused military service or gave them sympathy or support was ruthless and several of his friends including Birukoff and Chertkov were banished to Siberia. But to his chagrin the authorities refused to touch him, although he repeatedly invited them to prosecute him. "The day will come when they will drag you to prison at the end of a rope," the Countess warned him. "That is all I want," was his answer.

On March 31, 1888, Tolstoy's last child was born, a son, Ivan Lvovich (Vanichka), whose death seven years later of scarlet-fever took away the last chance of his having a spiritual heir. In the meantime he published some more remarkable works—*The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (1886) which profoundly moved Gandhiji, *The Kingdom of God is Within You* (1893) and finally *What is Art* (1896), which some consider to be his greatest intellectual *tour-de-force.*

Tolstoy had devoted the last chapter of *What Shall We Do Then?* to the duty of women and declared that the future lay with them,—not the woman who becomes artificially childless and fascinates man with her sex appeal—"(she) is not the woman who rules man, (she is) a woman debauched by man, who has descended to the level of the debauched man", and so like him has lost all meaning of life, but "the mother who has fulfilled her law while man did not fulfil his".[55] Such a mother who sees in the bringing forth and bringing up of children "her self-sacrificing vocation and the fulfilment of God's will"[56] would, he

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said, apply the same law to her children and her husband's life also. She would not wish to bring up and educate her children in such a way that they might be able to escape the law of body-labour; she would not tempt them with candies and other dainties and amusements and would not fear to leave them unprovided for if her husband had no fortune or assured position. By the same token she would not incite her husband to sham, false work, "which aims only at making use of other people's labour",[57] or attain or retain his position by unjust means. On the contrary, she would seek to make the future of her children secure by so bringing them up that they might be able with confidence to face life, live by their honest industry and be satisfied with whatever their labour brought them. In the hands of such women-mothers "alone is the salvation of the men of our world from the evils from which they suffer".[58]

Every woman, he had further declared, "who refrains from child-birth without refraining from sexual relations is a whore", no matter how refined she may be.[59] He believed at this stage that a large and healthy family is one of the essentials of happiness. This, however, was soon to be left behind. He reverted to the subject of relations between the sexes in *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1889), where he uncompromisingly laid down the ideal—which like many of his other things, his apostolical successor, the Mahatma, was further to elaborate and practise—of absolute chastity, not only for the unmarried but for the married also, towards which one had unceasingly to travel in the quest after perfection.

Tongue in cheek, critics cynically suggested after the publication of *The Kreutzer Sonata* that the grapes had turned sour; the sage was getting old and so had begun damning sins "he had no mind for". The cheap gibe was only a convenient excuse provided to themselves by those who detested an ideal for which they had no wish to strive. The "grapes", as more than one biographer of Tolstoy has attested, were still very tempting when *The Kreutzer Sonata* was written. "I was myself a husband last night, but that is no reason for abandoning the struggle. God may grant me not to be so again," he told Aylmer Maude when he was nearly seventy. Illustrative of the grimness of the struggle that he had to pass through is the episode of Domna, the buxom cook-maid on his Yasnaya Polyana estate. Past fifty, with his hair beginning to be streaked with grey, to his dismay he found that he was seized with a desire for her which he felt himself helpless to resist and even made a rendezvous with her in a quiet lane for the next day. Disgusted with himself he took the tutor Alexeyev aside. "Accompany me whenever I go out for a walk," he implored him, "and maybe, this desire will pass off". And he described to him in detail the strait he was in, to make himself "thoroughly ashamed of my weakness". God helped him. But, not to tempt providence too far, he had Domna transferred else-

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where. It was not until he was eighty-one, a year before his death, that he admitted—again to Maude—that he finally ceased to be troubled by sexual desire.[60]

In 1899 appeared his last great novel, *Resurrection*. He was then seventy-one. A Hindu friend had sent him "an exquisite book of Hindu wisdom—*Raja Yoga* or conquering External Nature" by Swami Vivekananda, that was published in New York in 1896. The book affected him profoundly and he took to practising some of the techniques presented in it for the disciplining of the mind and self-conquest.

In 1901 the Most Holy Synod of the Russo-Greek orthodox church excommunicated him. The publication of his article "I Cannot Be Silent" led to the arrest of the editor, and several newspapers were fined (July 1908). His fame by now had spread throughout the world. His eightieth birthday brought messages of respectful homage and greetings from all over the world—among others from Romain Rolland, Bernard Shaw, Masaryk and M. K. Gandhi.

6

The changes in Tolstoy's life led to much conflict with his wife and children. His wife was alternately annoyed and amused by what she regarded as her husband's "idiosyncrasies". At first she tolerated and even encouraged his physical work which she thought was good for his health. But as he became more and more absorbed in his search for God she was worried by the transformation in his whole character wrought by his profound spiritual struggle. His eyes, she noted, were often "fixed and strange", he "hardly talked at all" and had "quite ceased to belong to this world".[61] The strain told on his health and he grew meek and humble. She would not let him renounce his property which, she maintained, he held in trust for his children. In consequence he made over all of his property, including the copyright over his writings before 1880, to her. She felt unhappy that he had "abandoned art" to devote himself to his theological and religious writings which brought little remuneration and for which, as she put it, "nobody cared". As his opinions crystallised and he began to criticise openly in his writings the "extravagant" way in which his family lived, she became definitely hostile to his teaching, his way of life and the entire Tolstoyan movement.

Matters came to a head with the arrival towards the close of 1883 of Chertkov, Tolstoy's chief disciple, who, she suspected, was alienating her husband from her, and of whose influence over him she became insanely jealous. She had a sharp tongue which could hurt deeply a sensitive spirit. "You should try to cure yourself" was her harsh comment on her husband's inner suffering.

> . . . If suddenly a happy man can see only the horrible things in life

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and can shut his eyes to everything good, something must be wrong with his health. . . . Once you said, 'I wanted to hang myself because I had no faith'. . . . Why are you unhappy now that you have a faith. Are you only now realising that the world is full of hungry, miserable and mean people? . . . God . . . guide you. . . . I am helpless.[62]

In her lucid intervals she recognised her shortcomings and tried to take a more balanced view of their differences. Early in 1883, she wrote:

He hurts me, though I know that he cannot help himself. He is a leader, he goes ahead of the crowd and points the way that others must take. I belong with the crowd. I move with the crowd, with the crowd I see the light of a lantern carried by any leader, including Lev, and I recognise it as a light. But I cannot move any faster; my crowd, my surroundings, my habits hold me back.[63]

But more often her mood was one of self-pity in which eagerness for self-vindication left no room for charity or any understanding of her husband's view-point.

In 1914 in her autobiography she wrote:

With nine children, I could not turn like a weathercock and face in the direction in which my husband, with his constantly changing ideas, was going. His search for truth was warm and sincere, but in me it would have been stupid imitation, which would have been unhealthy for the family. . . . If, in accordance with my husband's wishes, all of our property had been given away to anyone who came along, I should have been left without a thing and with nine children on my hands. I should have had to work in order to feed them, to sew and wash, and to let them grow up without any education. My husband, true to his calling and talent, could not have done anything except write.[64]

With twelve pregnancies, in twenty-two years of married life and another offspring on the way, she understandably felt unhappy when he disapproved of the employment of a wet-nurse and insisted that she breast-feed her coming baby. She was very upset to hear of the Moscow joke—"*Voilà le véritable 'postscriptum' de la Sonate de Kreutzer!*" (There is the real postscript to *The Kreutzer Sonata*), when their last child arrived after the publication of the "post script" to *The Kreutzer Sonata*. Her mind began to deteriorate. She developed a morbid resentment against her husband whom in her disordered imagination she began to picture as "a debauchee and a voluptuary" whose revoltingly candid description of his youth in his diaries had "soiled her innocence" and "poisoned her soul".[65] To aggravate matters she developed a violent Platonic attachment to S.I. Taneyev, the pianist and composer, which caused Tolstoy no end of agony, more on her account than on his own, till her idol finally shook her off.

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Generally Tolstoy was very long-suffering with her. But often in the heat of family arguments his restraint about mutual differences broke down. The daily encounters with her became a torture to him. Sometimes he had no respite the night through. Even more torturing to him was a sense of his own shortcomings. He admitted that he was, especially in the early days of his conversion, often harsh and intolerant and he blamed his own imperfection for his failure in respect of his wife.

I cannot blame Sonya. She cannot be blamed for not accepting my teachings. The things that she now clings to so persistently are the very things that for years I encouraged her to accept. Besides, during the early stage of my awakening I was too irritable and too insistent in my efforts to persuade her that I was right. At that time I presented my new understanding of life in such an unpleasant and unacceptable form that she felt a natural revulsion. Now I feel that she will never be able to attain the truth in the way that I have. The fault for closing the door to her is mine.

The last years of Tolstoy were filled with a feeling of terrible spiritual loneliness. His five sons had gradually drifted away from him. The last three had grown up during the period of the deepening rift between their father and mother. They felt no need for his philosophy, which to them had only turned their gay, cheerful human father into a solemn, irritable fanatical reformer, who quarrelled with the Countess over trifles. In self-justification his second son once exclaimed:

How is it possible to reconcile the 'godly' life—the life of the beggar and peasant which appeals so much to Papa—with the unalterable, fundamental beliefs that have been instilled in us from our childhood; the unquestionable duty of having to eat soup and meat at dinner, to speak English and French, to prepare for school and the university, and to memorize our parts for amateur theatricals? We children often felt that we had not failed to understand Papa, but on the contrary, he could no longer understand us because he was preoccupied with something all his own. . . .[66]

He was too fair-minded to question the validity of his son's logic. But as a father he felt sad and sorry for him.

As one after another the sons married—the last one in 1901—and settled down, the Tolstoy family became smaller and smaller. The three daughters stood steadfastly by him, and in a greater or less measure shared his spiritual life. But they also were married in course of time —Mary to Prince Obolensky in 1897, and Tatyana, the only member of the Tolstoy family whom Gandhiji was to meet in person (see Plate 7, batch 2, between pages 288 and 289), to M. S. Sukhotin in 1899. Tolstoy was left with his wife and his youngest daughter.

He felt that he was unloved, that his real self was detested, in his family, where he was unwanted except as a source of income which

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was bad for them. They on their part thought his mind was slipping. He was threatened with commitment to a lunatic asylum if he attempted a distribution of his property to the poor. Every attempt on his part to reason with them to change their way of life was met with determined resistance.

I try to talk to them, but they seem unable to grasp my words. . . . Their heartlessness amazes me. . . . I have been assigned the role of a grumbling old man, and I am nothing else in their eyes. If I should share their lives, I should be disloyal to the truth and they would be the very first to point out my inconsistency to me. If I continue sadly to watch their behaviour, I am a grumbling old man like all other old men.[67]

The incongruity of his position as a preacher of poverty and self-denial remaining a "hanger-on" in a family that continued to be antagonistic to his views, set him at war with himself. He felt he was being "swamped" in their life. More than once he resolved to seek escape in flight from a situation in which he felt he was trapped and getting more and more entangled. He longed to disappear, be lost in the crowds, "a homeless, nameless tramp"—cease to be Tolstoy. "No matter how great the hardships of a tramp's life are . . . they cannot . . . compare with this heartache".[68] And again, "If only I could be sure of myself, because I cannot go on with this insane life. Even they would derive good from it. If they have any semblance of a heart, they would be forced to think". He prayed and prayed again, "screaming with pain that He would save me from this life".[69] Still he could not decide. Flight from the family appeared to him at this stage as an unforgivable weakness. He accepted his suffering as a cross sent by God, and braced himself to endure to the end.

His wife became more and more unhinged. She began to interfere in his relations with the public and sometimes created embarrassing situations for him by getting the Yasnaya Polyana tenants prosecuted for trespass and issuing without his knowledge statements which were contrary to his wishes and convictions. As her psychosis deepened she grew hysterical and more than once threatened suicide. Finally, she demanded that they resume marital relations that had long since been discontinued.

He sympathised with her, felt that she had suffered much, pitied her and tried his best to help her and to protect her even against herself. But the effort proved too much for him. He began to have fainting fits sometimes with convulsions, and attacks of palpitation of heart became frequent.

The long struggle was finally ended on October 28, 1910, with his secret flight from home in the midst of a raging snow storm. "I was saving myself, not Lev Nikolayevich, but that thing which, sometimes and perhaps only in small degree, is inside of me," he wrote in his

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diary, describing his departure.[70] As Riccardo Bacchelli puts it, it was simply a "natural . . . indomitable, unrestrainable gesture", full of spiritual and mystic pain, "crucifying, heroic and ascetic, religious and tragic in its silent, solitary, titanic bareness". He was fleeing from "despair, servitude and the torment of his search for God" towards "hope (and) freedom, death in God and God in death".[71]

In the railroad carriage people recognised him. Innocently he had imagined he could escape from Yasnaya Polyana and bury himself in obscurity in some remote place. It had not occurred to him that his face was "the best known in Russia" and was alone enough to give him away; that everybody on the train knew of his presence there; and that the news of his secret flight had already been flashed by the press to the whole world. Besides, how could Leo Nikolayevich Tolstoy help being himself? Soon he was engaged in an animated discussion with "a peasant, a surveyor and a student" on the subject of religion, Henry George, and education. In the words of Ernest Simmons,

> Warming up to the debate, he rose to his feet in order more forcefully to drive home his points, almost shouting so that he could be heard above the customary medley of train noises. The discussion turned into a lecture as passengers from both ends of the coach left their seats and gathered around to listen to Russia's most famous man. The student assiduously took notes. This man, who a few hours before had stealthily run away from his wife to seek a peaceful retreat, now stood in a crowded third class railway coach and expounded the eternal law, like some Biblical prophet with his massive, grey bearded head, emphatically declaring that he did not believe in a God who created the world but in One who lived in the consciousness of people.[72]

After a break at Kozyolsk—some seventy miles from Yasnaya Polyana—where he wished to visit his sister Masha in Optina Monastery near Shamardino—the journey was resumed on October 30. But on reaching Astapovo station it had to be abandoned. A chill that he had caught had developed into pneumonia. He was removed to the station master's hut, where on the following day he dictated the following thought for his Notebook:

> God is the infinite All: man is only His finite manifestation. God is that infinite All of which man recognises himself to be a finite part. Only God truly exists. Man is His manifestation in matter, time and space. The more the manifestation of God in man (life) unites itself with the manifestations (the lives) of other beings, the more he himself exists. The union of his life with the lives of other beings is accomplished through love.
>
> God is not love, but the more love man has, the more he manifests God, the more he truly exists.[73]

But the oil in the lamp had nearly all burnt out. His strength was wan-

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ing. At midnight on November 4, he began to sink rapidly. His wife, Alexandra and other members of the Tolstoy family had in the meantime arrived. The Abbot of the Optina Monastery had been sent under orders of the Holy Synod to persuade the dying man to be reconciled to the Church. Fearing the duplicity of the clergy of the time and knowing well his wishes in the matter, Tolstoy's attendants refused to admit him to the sick room. During his illness Tolstoy showed no fear of death. "But you know how the peasants die," he said, with a sigh when his pillows were straightened. Shortly before his end he called his son, Sergei, to his side. "Truth . . . I love much" were practically the last words he uttered. At quarter to six on November 7, 1910, he had ceased to breathe.

The Synod forbade all memorial services. But throughout Russia the day was observed as a day of public mourning. The St. Petersburg University suspended lectures, all the theatres were closed, and the Czar, the Dumas and the Council of State sent official messages of condolences. He was buried at a place he had selected near the edge of the ravine, where his beloved brother, Nikolai, when they were children together, had hidden the little "green stick" on which was written the secret, "which when it became known to mankind, would bring about a Golden Age on earth," all mankind would then become brothers and evil and misery would cease.

* * *

In the year following Tolstoy's death Yasnaya Polyana was purchased from his sons and distributed to the peasants according to his will. His prophecy, that if men of his time did not mend their ways, a "workers' revolution with horrors of destruction and murder would ensue", was fulfilled not many years afterwards. In 1917 came the Bolshevik Revolution and not to have calloused hands was treated not as a matter of "shame" only but a crime for which members of the rich, leisured class—those with soft, white hands—were made to pay with their lives. When the storm broke out, and the insurrectionists came to Yasnaya Polyana to burn and destroy, the Countess and Tanya —her husband had died—were sitting on their packed trunks ready to flee. But the peasants of the Tolstoy estate, now its owners, drove back the attackers and saved the estate and the members of the Tolstoy family, including the Countess, who had opposed him, quarrelled with him for his sympathy with his tenants, and literally driven him to his death from the fate that overtook all the farms in the neighbourhood and their owners. It was the only estate for miles around to escape destruction.

In his diary Tolstoy had anticipated that any change in his wife's feelings would come perhaps independently of her mind. "Gradually in its own peculiar feminine way, incomprehensible to me . . . she will

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arrive at the same thing, after her own fashion."[74] In 1914 Alexandra Tolstoy, his daughter, who had faithfully stood by him through all the domestic storms, visited her mother before leaving for the Turkish front as a nurse. The Countess was wizened and bent. Her brilliant black eyes, that were once so snapping, had grown dull so that she saw but poorly. "Why are you going to the war?" she asked, "Father would not have approved!"

In 1918 she again visited Yasnaya Polyana. There was a famine following the Bolshevik revolution. Dinner was being served on a table covered with snow-white cloth as before. There was silver . . . but on plates there were only boiled winter beets and some black bread made by mixing dough with chaff.

Before her death the Countess admitted that she had been very unjust to her great husband. "Sasha dear," she said to Alexandra, when she saw her for the last time in 1920, "forgive me, I do not know what came over me. . . . I really think I was insane. . . . I know I was the cause of his death."[75]

7

Of all the attempts made towards the close of the nineteenth century to rediscover Christianity none was marked by such single-mindedness and passion for truth as Tolstoy's. Dissatisfied with the current Christian beliefs as propounded by the Church and confronted with the difficulties that a literal interpretation of the Gospels raised, the founders of the Esoteric Christian Union had resorted to the method of allegorical interpretation and declared that Christ "the Only Begotten" of the Gospels was not a person, and the narratives about Christ's miracles were to be treated not as "historical matter". (See p. 323.) They were to be regarded as allegories of eternal truths which its founders claimed on the strength of their own mystical experience that they had authoritatively interpreted. This only replaced one authoritarianism by another. To sustain their dogma they were driven to have recourse to pseudo-scientific arguments that at times sounded rather naive.

Tolstoy on the other hand, while regarding Jesus as a person, eliminated from his exegesis of the Gospels all metaphysical and non-ethical elements. His proud rationalism rebelled against authoritarianism of any kind. "Christ I regard as a man like all of us," he declared. "To regard Him as God is to renounce God." As for the miraculous birth of Christ, "I know nothing, and I do not need to know." Christ was a great man whose teaching was divine to the extent to which it expressed divine truths. But the Buddha and other men were as great and Jesus held no monopoly of the truth.

The teaching of Jesus was true, not because he was the Son of God

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but because it coincided with the light of human conscience: "Take away the Church, the traditions, the Bible and even Christ Himself, the ultimate fact of man's knowledge of goodness that is of God, directly through reason and conscience will be as clear and certain as ever and it will be seen that we are dealing with *truths* that can never perish—truths humanity can never afford to part with."[76]

He challenged the contention of the Church that its teaching being based on revelation was above the scrutiny of reason. God had revealed the truth in the souls of men so that men might be guided by it. His word, therefore, ought to be easily comprehensible to those for whom it was meant. He could not, if He expected His word to be respected, speak a language incomprehensible to reason. If, therefore, Revelation presented by the Church was the truth, it ought not to fear the scrutiny of reason. "I call revelation what is revealed to reason which has reached its highest limits, the contemplation of what is divine, that is, above the reason of the standing truth. I call revelation what gives an answer to the question, insoluble to reason . . . the question as to what meaning life has."[77]

These were the questions to which he sought an answer in the Gospels: "What I am, what God is, and what the one chief basis of every revelation is".

The answer, he insisted, must be comprehensible to him, "for no one can believe what is incomprehensible, and the knowledge of what is incomprehensible is equal to ignorance"; it must not contradict the laws of reason, for "God can do anything but this: He cannot talk nonsense. And it would be stupid to write a revelation which cannot be understood";[78] and finally, it must be the contrary of wilful and "inevitable to reason, as inevitable as is the assumption of infinity to one who can count". Its ultimate basis, like the origin of everything, might remain incomprehensible in itself; there were well recognised limits to the reach of man's intellect, "but all the deductions of the consequence, derived from it should solve all the questions of my life". In other words, the answer must be clear, true and rational, such as a person could believe in spontaneously with his whole soul and not as something that he was under an arbitrary obligation to believe. Revelation could not be based on faith in the sense of "trust in advance in what I shall be told. *Faith is the consequence of the inevitableness and truth of the revelation, which fully satisfies reason*".[79]

Faith had been turned by the Church into an instrument of perversion to destroy the consciousness of equality among men which Christianity had proclaimed but which the Church and its master, the State, found it inconvenient to practise. A dodge was devised, which consisted of attributing infallibility not only to certain writings but also to a certain set of men called the Church who had a right to "hand on this infallibility to people they themselves select"[80]; a slight addition

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to the Gospels was invented to sustain the imposture, and faith was defined as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). Dubbing the whole melancholy business as trickery to numb people's reason, Tolstoy maintained that faith is "neither hope, nor credulity", (for the evidence referred to in the Epistle, as the text shows, is simple credulity,) but "a special state of the soul" which obliges man to do certain things, "not because . . . he believes in the unseen as in the seen", nor even "because he hopes to attain his expectation" but because "having defined his position in the universe, he naturally acts according to that position".[81] The test and essence of all religious beliefs, asserted Tolstoy, is that "by defining man's position in the universe (they) inevitably demand conduct in accord with that position."[82] Thus acts, for instance, a true Christian who believes that "God is the spiritual Father of all men, and that the highest human blessedness is attainable by man when he acknowledges his sonship to God and the brotherhood of all mankind".[83]

This faith, unlike the basic hypothesis of science, Tolstoy went on to state, is not a theoretical assumption but a verifiable fact of experience. Though like the former incapable of proof, it is in itself not irrational but, on the contrary, "it gives a more rational meaning to occurrences in life which without it would seem irrational and contradictory". The decisive test which distinguishes true faith from its perversion, he finally affirmed, is that

> in a perverted faith man demands that God, in return for sacrifice and prayers, should fulfil his wishes and serve man. But, in a true faith, man feels that God demands from him the fulfilment of His will; demands that man should serve God.[84]

Miracles had evidently been introduced into the narratives of the Apostles in order to strengthen the faith of the people. It might have served that purpose then but in modern times it only obscured the meaning of Christ's teaching and undermined faith instead of strengthening it. To adduce miracles as a proof of truth, he said, was like lighting a candle to illuminate light. "A candle is needed where there is darkness. But if there is light, there is no sense in illuminating it with a candle, for it will be seen without it. Christ's miracles are the candles which are brought into the light in order to illuminate it. If there is light, it will be seen anyway; and if there is no light, then it is only the candle which is shedding light."[85]

Leaving the miracles and the historical meaning of the Gospels alone, therefore, Tolstoy confined himself to harmonising and elucidating the sense only of the teaching of the four principal Gospels. These, he was satisfied, contained the whole of Christian tradition. He similarly left out the writings of the Old Testament. Everything that preceded the New Testament could serve only as historical material for the

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understanding of the Gospels, and everything subsequent as an elucidation of those books. The Books of the Old Testament could help in explaining the form in which Christ's teaching was expressed and the relation in which it stood to Judaism, which it was to replace, but they could not explain or limit the meaning of Christ's teaching. The Acts of the Apostles, and many of the epistles of John, Peter and James "had nothing in common with the Gospels but frequently contradicted them". The Revelation "absolutely reveals nothing". By putting the seal of infallibility on everything that is set down in the Gospels—the miracles, the Acts of the Apostles etc.—and recognising it all as sacred truth the Church had been led to justify everything, "shut the eyes, conceal, make false deals, fall into contradictions, and, alas, frequently tell an untruth."[86]

His critical study of the Gospels led Tolstoy to the conclusion that far from being infallible expressions of divine truth they were the work of thousands of minds and hands. Through centuries of transmission since they were first put together they had passed through countless compilations, translations and transcriptions from copies written in continuous script without punctuation marks, by men who were often uneducated, besides being biased and superstitious. In the process many errors had crept into them; interpolations were introduced for which there was not the slightest warrant, while translations had intentionally been manipulated so as to make their meaning run contrary to the drift and spirit of the whole teaching of Christ.[87] Refusing to regard every syllable and every verse in the New Testament as sacred, Tolstoy freely exercised the right to question and revise the text and the renderings authorised by the Church in the light of the original Greek, and even to go behind it, where it seemed obscure or made no sense, in order to bring their meaning into agreement with the pure teaching of Christ contained in the entirely clear passages.

Thus read, he found that the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount provided all the guidance that he needed to keep the evil out of his life, and gave to life a purpose which death could not destroy. But it was more than that. It related no less to society than to each individual. Only that teaching is true, he once wrote to a young correspondent, which indicates a way of life satisfactory to the demands of the soul and at the same time conducive to the good of others. Christianity was neither a way of religious quietism, nor of exclusive concern about one's own soul, nor even of the impatient reformer, "who wishes to confer benefits on the others without himself knowing wherein true indubitable good consists". The Christian life, he said, was such that it was impossible to do good to others "except by doing good to oneself" or to do good to oneself "otherwise than by doing good to one's neighbours".[88] Christianity was not a mystical doctrine, of worship and personal salvation, but a new life concep-

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tion which made certain demands on those who professed it, in regard to their way of life. To shirk that challenge "by equivocation, concealment and untruth", as the Church, working hand-in-hand with the State, did, was "blasphemous denial of Christianity".

8

The teaching of Christ, as interpreted by Tolstoy, was a philosophical, moral and social doctrine which if sincerely followed was bound to transform not only the way of life of the individual but the entire fabric of human society. The final injunction of Christ, for instance, which sums up the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount, "Love God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind and thy neighbour as thyself", in its ultimate application leads to the equality of all men, the freedom from racial hatred, and the abolition of patriotism, as being a parochial feeling in which the love of our neighbour suffers curtailment. From the injunction "Thou shalt not kill" follows not only the abolition of war and of capital punishment, but also vegetarianism. And from this in conjunction with the prohibition against swearing, we come to the necessity of passive opposition to Courts of Justice and every kind of government based on force. Christ's precept of mendicancy and taking no thought for the morrow points to the abolition of private ownership and to the establishment of the Christian commune.

For this these precepts had to be understood as explained in the Gospels and not to be "interpreted" according to one's caprice or to suit one's convenience. Rejecting the theological explanation that the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount were only indications of the perfection which fallen man could not aspire to attain by his own strength and that his salvation, therefore, lay only through "faith, prayer and sacraments", he maintained that they related directly to the individual, and demanded his personal fulfilment.

In a passage aglow with his new-found faith he set down his creed:

> I believe that my welfare in the world will only be possible when all men fulfil Christ's teaching.
>
> I believe that the fulfilment of that teaching is possible, easy, and joyful.
>
> I believe that before that teaching is universally followed, even were I alone in fulfilling it, there is still nothing for me to do to save my life from inevitable ruin but to fulfil that teaching, just as there is no alternative way of escape from a burning house for a man who has found the door leading to safety. . . .
>
> I believe that this teaching confers blessedness on all humanity, saves me from inevitable destruction, and gives me here the greatest possible welfare. Therefore I cannot but accept it.[89]

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To those who asked what would happen, if men literally followed Christ's teaching—who would feed them, if, for instance, they gave up all worldly possessions, they would die of hunger—his answer was that Christ had anticipated this objection and given his reply in the saying, "All these things shall be added unto you." Man does not live that others should serve him but that he should himself serve others. If one works without ulterior motive and without the desire to accumulate wealth, those who need his services will take care of him and provide for his family.

Similarly, in regard to the ideal of chastity. The ideal was false, it was said, because if men acted up to it mankind would become extinct. Those who put forward this excuse knew well enough that this was a lie. They really did not believe in it, they were never serious about it and they had never tried. If they had they would have found that what made the ideal seem inaccessible was not anything inherent in the nature of the ideal itself but the fact that they could not, if they wished to succeed, "desire and seek physical idleness and a life of repletion" which inflamed in them excessive desire; they could not seek "those amusements which inflame amatory lust—novels, verses, music, theatres and balls"; their entire pattern of life and social behaviour would have to change. For this they were not prepared and so they found fault with the ideal. There was no immediate or remote possibility of mankind becoming extinct, if only because "an ideal is an ideal only when its accomplishment is possible only in the *idea*" and that applied to chastity also. Far from becoming extinct mankind would be elevated if people strove to live up to the ideal of chastity.

Finally about non-killing: How should a man act if he sees clearly evil resulting from adherence to the law of love and its corollary non-resistance? it was sometimes asked. How is a man to act, to take a stock example, if he finds a robber killing or outraging a child, when it seems to him that he can save the child only by killing the robber? Would this not make it his duty to save the child? Tolstoy's reply is uncompromising. Even such an extreme case provides no rational justification for departing from the law of non-killing. "By killing the robber he certainly kills; whereas he cannot know positively whether the robber would have killed the child or not."[90] For who knows whether he would not change his mind at the last moment? Besides, killing of the robber to save the child would be justified only if a man knew for certain that "the child's life was more needed, and was better than the robber's". To decide that he would need to know "what would become of the child whom he saves, and what—had he not killed him—would have been the future of the robber he kills".[91] And since this knowledge is not given to any one there can be no rational ground for killing a robber even to save a child. "He may plead with the robber, may interpose his own body between the robber and his victim, but

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there is one thing he cannot do: he cannot deliberately abandon the law he has received from God, the fulfilment of which alone gives meaning to his life."[92] On the same analogy it could be argued: "A man's life is in danger, and can be saved only by . . . telling a lie—therefore in certain cases one must lie. A man is starving, and one can save him only by stealing—therefore in certain cases one must steal"[93] and so on. In short, there is hardly any moral law in respect of which a case cannot be made out in which it would appear difficult to decide whether to obey or disobey. The hypothetical instance of a robber and a child probably no one had actually seen. But the evils from the ever-increasing use of violence are patent to anybody who has eyes to see. "When two enemies fight, each may think his own conduct justified by the cricumstances. Excuses can be made for every use of violence; and no infallible standard has ever been discovered by which to measure the worth of these excuses".[94] Christ, therefore, said Tolstoy, taught men "to believe in no excuse for violence—never to use violence".

No one knows or can know, finally argued Tolstoy, what results will follow from his action. But each man, who believes in Christ's teaching, knows what he should do to perform the will of Him who sent him into the world. Once we depart from the principle that the purpose of man's life is only to serve His will, regardless of the consequences that may flow from one's actions and admit that His indubitable law "contained alike in tradition, in our reason and in our hearts"[95] may be departed from in favour of what may appear to be advantageous to us or expedient at a given moment, there is no rational basis left for either goodness or morality.

9

The leading tenets of Tolstoy's religious teaching may be stated thus: Religion is not a belief in certain supernatural occurrences, nor in the necessity for certain prayers and ceremonies; nor is it "the superstitions of ancient ignorance". Religion is a certain relation established by man between his separate personality and the infinite universe or its Source, and "man's purpose in life which results from that relation; and it supplies rules of conduct resulting from that purpose".[96] God is not a person and there is no personal immortality, but whenever anyone devotes his life to carrying out His will, which is that love should grow within the individual and within the entire world, his work becomes indestructible and the individual, after his physical death will merge with the love existing in the cosmos, that is, with God. In this way a truly Christian life acquires a purpose, despite the inevitability of individual death, which makes life blissful and robs death of its sting.

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The essence of religion lies in the power inherent in man "to foreknow and to point out the way in which mankind must walk. . . .This faculty of foreknowledge concerning the destiny of humanity is more or less common. . .to all people. Still from time to time a man appears in whom the faculty has reached a higher development".[97] Such were the Prophets or founders of the principal religions of the world.

Outwardly regarded, religions present an endless variety, but they are all alike in their fundamental principles. These principles basic to all religions constitute the true religion.

The first principles common to all religions, Universal Religion or simply Religion, as Tolstoy called it, are that "there is a God, the Cause of causes, the origin of all things"; that "in man's heart dwells a spark from the Divine origin", which man can by his way of living increase or decrease; that this indwelling light of God in man manifests itself in the working of reason and provides the basis of goodness; "that to increase this divine spark man must suppress his passions and increase love in himself; and that the practical means to attain this result is to do to others as you would they should do to you".[98]

These universal truths common to all religions, Tolstoy asserted, are "so simple, easily comprehensible and near to the heart of every man" that they immediately compel recognition. We are of necessity led to recognise ourselves as a part of the whole—a part of something infinite. This infinite, of which we recognise ourselves to be a part, is God. To the unenlightened, namely, those who are unable to apprehend anything beyond matter, God will, therefore, be matter, "endless in time and space". But to the enlightened, "those who understand that the beginning and essence of life is not in matter but in the Spirit", God will be "that infinite, unlimited being which they recognise in themselves within boundaries limited by time and space".[99] To sum up: "God is that whole of which we acknowledge ourselves to be a part: to a materialist—matter; to an individualist—a magnified, non-natural man; to an idealist—his ideal, Love."[100]

This basis of our life, the immaterial principle, which is not limited or subject to conditions of time and space, otherwise known as God, can be "neither good nor evil. It is that which is". Such a God, affirmed Tolstoy, "has been recognised and acknowledged and will be acknowledged by mankind at all times, so long as it does not fall into a beastly state".[101]

God and Soul cannot be known or explained by means of definitions, but "in quite a different way". We are led to it "inevitably" just as we are led to the certainty of the infinity of numbers,

> To one I add one, and one more, and another one, and yet another one, or I break a stick in two, and again in two, and again, and again—and I cannot help knowing that number is infinite,

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To the certain knowledge of God we are led by the question "Whence come we?"

I was born of my mother, and she of my grandmother, and she of her great-grandmother, but the very first—of whom? And I inevitably arrive at God.

My legs are not I, my arms are not I, my head is not I, my feelings are not I, even my thoughts are not I, then what am I? I am I, I am my soul.

These two views of life, that of life as "matter in motion separate from everything else by which man is cognised as self"; and the other which recognises man's true self as an immovable being, "always equal to itself", and "subject to no changes", *appear* to be different but are really not so, being but two sides of the concept of "cognising oneself as a spiritual being enclosed within limits".[102]

"As early as 1897," Tolstoy records, "I knew that He existed and that I existed in Him, that outside that there is nothing. I was in Him a limited being in the illimitable, He in me the illimitable within the limited".[103]

We truly live only when we have an awareness of this spiritual being within us, which is untrammelled by the limitations of matter, space or time, "always equal to itself" and "subject to no changes". It always exists. But this awareness is not given to all of us or to us at all times. When we look within ourselves, we know that the principle of consciousness is one and unchangeable, and that it does not begin or end. But when we fix our gaze on the motion of "the limits of consciousness in other beings" we are led to think that our being grows and expands in time, that is, moves, when in fact what moves is the limits in which our spiritual beings are confined, "just as it seems to us that the moon is moving, when the clouds pass over it".[104]

The mistake lies in taking for life that which limits life. The moment we realise that life consists in the immaterial or spiritual principle which we recognise as our true self, or ego, the concept of death will appear to us to be a delusion and death will "cease to be an evil but only a change of form", signifying "progress in life".

The importance of the recognition of this "spiritual, unchangeable principle" as our true self and "not its manifestation within the limits in which it is manifested" has always been emphasised by all the religious teachers. From this consciousness results "all that which is called virtue, and which gives the highest good of man". From it also flows "that which forms the foundation of all virtues, viz., love, that is the recognition of the life of all the beings of the world through oneself". And from the same cognition, result also "continence, fearlessness and self-renunciation", because "only with these is possible the fulfilment of the fundamental demands of consciousness . . . the recognition of other being through oneself, that is love",

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In John III, 3, "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but one that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven", Tolstoy found a complete definition of man's relation to the Cause of causes and the rules of conduct towards his fellows resulting from it.

Man must recognise himself to be the Son of God, and so he must recognise all other men to be. If man only understood and remembered who he is, he would not abase and defile his dignity with contemptible, low cares and acts. And if he remembered that every man is just such a son of God, he would not permit himself to insult and despise men—the sons of God and his brothers.[105]

In the language of the *Gita*:

For, whoso thus beholds, in every place,
In every form, the same, one, Living Life,
Doth no more wrongfulness unto himself.

Quoting Pascal, Tolstoy summed up: "A man who has recognised his life is like a slave who suddenly discovers that he is a king".[106]

10

Good life and good cheer have somehow often gone hand-in-hand in our history of hagiology. Some of Tolstoy's keenest shafts were directed against the current notion that a man might lead a life of self-indulgence and ease and yet be considered good or righteous. An essential concomitant of a good and religious life, arising out of the law of love enunciated in the Sermon on the Mount, according to him, was to eat one's bread in the sweat of one's brow and to have the fewest wants. Before the advent of Christianity, all the great teachers of mankind—religious and non-religious alike—had laid the greatest stress on disciplining of one's desires as an indispensable preliminary to the attainment of virtue. Plato's virtues began with self-control. Courage, wisdom and justice came only after it. The Christian ethics prescribed self-renunciation, as the first step for the attainment of devotion to the will of God from which love of mankind follows as an inevitable consequence. But some of the exponents of current Christianity openly scoffed at "a Christianity of fasting and privations" and boasted that theirs was "a Christianity of beef steaks!"[107] The modernists had even advanced the theory that increase of desires and the means for their gratification was a sign of progress, civilisation and culture—"the more a man wants, the more refined these wants, the better he is". This, said Tolstoy, whether regarded from the purely utilitarian view-point of enlightened self-interest, or the Pagan view-

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point based on justice, or the Christian view-point which demands love, was untenable. There can be neither disinterestedness, nor justice without self-control—not to talk of generosity or love.

From his unrivalled knowledge of human nature, Tolstoy had found that true life begins where "the tiny bit" begins. Man's consciousness being a whole where nothing can happen in any part without every other part being affected, we must, he said, pay particular attention to the condition in which those tiny alterations take place, "just as one must be specially attentive to the condition of scales on which other things are to be weighed".[108] Luxurious living or indulgence in intoxicants and narcotics, however mild, was not a mere detail. Besides clouding the intellect and the faculty of fine discrimination it dulled one's moral sense.

What did it matter, good people argued, if they occasionally allowed themselves an extra delicacy for the satisfaction of the "inner men"? In support they quoted the verse, "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man but what cometh out of the mouth" (Matt. 15.11). Tolstoy told those who argued like this: "Check for a while the activity of your intellect and consult only your heart.

> Whoever you may be . . . however kind to those about you . . . can you sit unmoved over your tea, your dinner, your political, artistic, scientific, medical, or educational affairs, while you hear or see at your door a hungry, cold, sick, suffering man? No. Yet they are always there, if not at the door, then ten yards or ten miles away. . . . You cannot be at peace—cannot have pleasure which is not poisoned by this knowledge.[109]

In his plan of self-discipline, he accordingly set down fasting as the first step towards the attainment of virtue, goodness and spirituality. "One may wish to be good, one may dream of goodness, without fasting," he declared, "but to *be* good without fasting is as impossible as it is to advance without getting up on to one's feet."[110]

It was a gross delusion to think, he said, that while being a slave to his desires, and regarding his life of desire as good, a man could lead a "good, useful, just and loving life". People sometime loosely talked about a particular person being religious, saintly, or holy. But what was the measure of saintliness or holiness? Tolstoy asked and answered: the only measure of a good life—not to talk of saintliness or holiness—is the "mathematical relation between love for self and love for others",[111] in other words between the amount of labour of others that he absorbed and the care and labour he bestowed on others. "The more a man gives to others and the less he demands for himself, the better he is; the less he gives to others and the more he demands for himself, the worse he is." If, for instance, instead of feeding others, a man eats too much himself he "not only (thereby) diminishes the possibility of giving away the surplus, but, by overeating, he deprives him-

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self of power to help others". A self-indulgent person, therefore, who leads a luxurious life,

> although he may possess the most amiable traits of character, meekness, good nature etc. cannot be good and lead a good life. . . . To be good and lead a good life means to give to others more than one takes from them.[112]

From this he derived what, after the peasant-philosopher T. F. Bondareff, he called the law of "bread-labour", which simply means: "If a man work not neither shall he eat." In the first place, Tolstoy said, this was to him "a test of sincerity in recognising the equality of all men". Secondly, it brought him nearer to the majority of labouring men from whom he was "fenced off by a wall" if, taking advantage of their want, he made them work to provide him the means for a life of comfort and ease. Finally, it gave him "the highest good, peace of mind, which does not exist and cannot exist in the life of a sincere man who makes use of the services of slaves".

Observance of the Five Commandments, Tolstoy believed, was not possible unless one practised abstemiousness and fulfilled the law of body labour. Take, for instance, the Commandment about non-anger. There was no more efficacious antidote for anger than physical work. On one occasion, when uncontrollable irritation and anger against his peasants had been rising within him, he found that he was able to overcome it and it evaporated of itself, as if by magic, when he joined them in hard, fatiguing labour. Similarly to keep one's lust under control one must eat only in obedience to necessity. Equally futile would prove all effort to practise absolute chastity in the case of a man who did not work with his hands till he perspired. The Christian ideal of love of God and one's fellow men demanded renunciation of one's self for the service of God and one's neighbour. Self-indulgence in any shape or form was service of self and consequently an obstacle to the service of God. But people were so accustomed to their own lies, said Tolstoy, that they did not wish to see through the lies of others lest others should see through theirs and so they quietly swallowed preposterous statements about the virtuousness and even the "sanctity" of people who led a life of self-indulgence and ease.

11

Consistently with his belief in the fundamental unity of all religions Tolstoy opposed proselytisation and authoritarianism and denied that there was anything like "Tolstoyism".

Religion being a matter of personal experience, he held, it can grow from within only as a result of one's own efforts. It cannot be imposed by another from outside. "A man can believe only what he is led to believe by the aggregate of all his spiritual forces."[113] If, therefore, some-

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body's religious belief differed from his it was not for him, he said, to tell or advise such a person to give up his own faith and accept his; "this is as impossible for him as to change his physiological nature." On the contrary, he must advise him to stick to what was his own "and to work it out still further". Every one, to begin with, he said, looks at the world, as it were, through the little window which he himself has cut out or chosen for himself. If, later, he finds that the view afforded by his window is not adequate or clear, he may of his own free will pass on to another man's window. But it would be "quite unreasonable" and, to say the least, "impolite" if he called a man, "who is satisfied with what he sees", away from his window to his own. Was it not enough, he asked, that "all looking at Him from various sides are able to do his chief law, to love one another, in spite of the difference of our view of Him?"[114]

Apart from the impropriety and irrationality of asking or even wishing that anybody should abandon his faith and accept ours, Tolstoy held that nobody had a right—a believer in the Christian teaching least of all—to arrogate to himself the claim that his or any particular religion was the highest or the only true religion, and all other religions were false or of a lower order. The Christian teaching, he maintained, differed from earlier Pagan teachings in this that, while the Pagan teaching was one of "final perfection", the Christian was one of "infinite perfecting". Life, according to the Christian doctrine, being "a condition of progress towards the perfection of God", no condition could be either higher or lower than another; because "each is itself a certain stage in human progress towards the unattainable perfection, and therefore equally important with all the others". Any spiritual quickening is an "accelerated movement" towards perfection. Hence

> the impulse of Zacchaeus the publican, of the adulteress and the thief on the cross, show forth a higher order of life than does the passive righteousness of the Pharisee.[115]

Therefore the man, "who from a lower plane lives up to the doctrine he professes, ever advancing towards perfection", leads a higher life, religiously speaking, than one "who may perhaps stand on a superior plane of morality" but who is making no progress towards perfection. "Thus, the stray lamb is dearer to the Father than those which are in the fold; the prodigal returned, the coin that was lost and is found again, more highly prized than those that never were lost."[116]

Since the fulfilment of the doctrine is in aspiration from the self towards God, it makes little difference from what point it starts, what course it takes or what point it attains. "It may start from any degree of perfection or of imperfection. There can be no rules or obligatory laws for its fulfilment." The genuineness and the intensity of the impulse alone matter. Therefore, if a man is helped by the practice of his faith,

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whatever it be—whether pantheism, animism or even fetish worship —to control his passions and increasingly to love all mankind, there can be no sense in asking him to give it up in favour of Christianity or any other religion of our preference that may be alien to his nature, although we ourselves may have derived the greatest benefit from it.

12

In the practice of his ideals Tolstoy never betrayed any woodenness or rigidity of outlook. He abhorred literalism and so his spirit remained ever fresh and he never ceased to grow in the knowledge of truth. Summarising his programme to reduce his demands on other people's labour and if necessary to begin to work for other people, in a letter sometime in 1888, he wrote: "He (a man) must do so cleanly and lovingly . . . (and) in doing so, . . . should try not to hurt the people close to him or the people who stand in his way."[117] He knew human nature too well to thrust his views on the members of his family. Even when he came to the conclusion that the only way to encourage the Christian life he believed in was by personal example, he realised that the process would be slow and difficult, and no miracles of sudden transformation were to be expected. While he continued to feel the way he did on how his family should live, he once wrote to his wife, he had "cured" himself of the "fallacious idea" that "other people must see things as I see them".

The new life that he had launched upon demanded that he forsake his family. "A man's enemies are those who are dear to him" (Micah 7.6) it had been said of old. But as he set about to translate the ideal into practice, he realised that the injunction about leaving the family being based on the principle of universal love, the saying could only mean that "one should not succumb to the temptation of serving the family instead of serving God". The family, he wrote in his diary, "is a man's body". Leaving the family would therefore be "another form of self-destruction". But it is the subjection of the flesh to the best of one's capacity, not self-annihilation that God requires of us. "The family is flesh; as a weak stomach needs light food, so a spoiled family needs more than one accustomed to privations."[118] In his later years being asked how he interpreted Christ's command to leave the family, he said: "My understanding is that you should forsake worrying about them, as if they belonged to you. If the word 'forsake' is taken literally as meaning to leave them to their fate, it would contradict the very essentials of love, which is the ultimate purpose."[119]

The more he learnt to take a broader and more tolerant view of the limitations of others the more exacting and unsparing a judge he became of his own shortcomings, knowing how prone we are to be partial to ourselves.

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In the course of his spiritual journey he finally arrived at a stage when even this failed to satisfy him. The same truth, he came to feel, did not hold for all; everybody must follow the truth of *his* being. Only by being true to oneself does one advance in the knowledge of truth, not by mechanical conformity or imitation of others. Being once asked for his advice by a young man, whose term of military service was approaching, whether he should refuse to enlist regardless of the effect it might have upon his mother, he chose not to answer his letter. Explaining his reason later he wrote:

> The teaching of Christ does not dictate anyone's actions: it points out the truth: questions of how one should act in a given occasion must be decided by each person in his own soul according to the degree of clarity and the strength of one's understanding of truth; and they should not be decided as I wish or do not wish to act according to the teaching of Christ, for I cannot act otherwise.[120]

In the prolonged struggle to realise the millennium in this work-aday world, which followed his conversion, Tolstoy's faith was often put to a severe test. In the first flush of enthusiasm over the discovery of the new truth it had seemed easy enough to retailor the world according to the new design. All that the people had to do was to clear their minds, accept the way of salvation pointed out by Christ, and they would find that his yoke was easy and his burden light. But after ten years of waiting the world still seemed to care little for the Kingdom of God, and preferred to go its pedestrian way. Tolstoyan settlements were languishing. Triumph of truth seemed a distant dream, perhaps not realisable in his life time. There were moments of uncertainty when he did not seem to be quite sure of his own teachings. These were, however, the birth pangs of a new truth that was slowly being born in his soul. The new phase in his spiritual development was marked by a gradual shift in the emphasis from the outer to the inner. No one, he began to see, is called upon to change the world in the name of truth. No one can live the truth fully perhaps even in his own life. But without worrying about the world, or whether his own example seem logical to other people, one can realise the truth in the eyes of God if one strives to the best of one's ability to follow the truth as it may appear to him. Man in his conceit fancies that he was sent to reform the world. But the results of his actions are beyond his control. Unforeseen obstacles beset his path at every step and force him into strange compromises and inconsistencies. Impatiently to break through them becomes a species of violence—resistance to evil by force—and lands him in inconsistency of an even graver nature. Our past imprisons us. We do not feel free to act. To let our karma work itself out needs infinite patience and self-suffering. And what applies to us applies equally to others. This severely limits the scope of teaching by action and

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personal example. Conscious acceptance of truth is all that is left to us.

Man has to become accustomed to the thought that, no matter how closely he follows Christ, there will be others who will not accept Christ and who will condemn him.

The Christian can achieve his purpose only by burning an inward light, which will serve as a beacon to other people . . . our actions must have roots, and these roots lie in submitting to the will of God in our private lives, which have to be devoted to perfection and to the cultivation of love.[121]

The only way to enlighten others is thus through attaining self-purification, by bearing witness steadfastly to the light within and exemplifying the validity of the Christian teaching of love for all under all conceivable circumstances.

Individual self-improvement and love under any imaginable circumstance became Tolstoy's watch-words. In all humility he accepted life with his family, that lived in a way contrary to his convictions, as another test of his faith. The more his difficulties increased, the more he was criticised because he continued to live amid wealth and pleasure, the more, he felt, he had "to learn to accept, to forgive, and to love". In his diary on July 2, 1908, he wrote:

If I had overheard someone tell about a man who lived in luxury, who squeezed what he could from the peasants and threw them into prison, who professed and preached Christianity while he gave away pennies, and who, whenever anything unpleasant had to be done, hid behind his wife's back, I would never have hesitated to call him a cad! *That was what I needed* to *free me* from worldly things, and to enable me to live for my soul.[122]

Even the practice of love under every imaginable circumstance presented baffling conundrums. Whom is one to love and how? To demonstrate love is not always easy, "because in fulfilling the demands of love we destroy another". Similarly, could one retain personal attachment consistently with the Christian ideal of universal love? There was no simple answer. One had to carry one's cross "everyday, hour, minute". The only key to the puzzle was provided by the formula in regard to the person to be loved: "I know that you love not me, . . . but my soul. And my soul is—your soul, and its demands are identical".[123] And finally, should a man exhaust his strength trying to learn to "love Herod" or to "tame spiders" and let love of mankind take care of itself, till he has attained self-perfection, or should he forget all about "loving Herod" and "taming spiders" and try progressively to widen the sphere of his love till it becomes all-embracing? He was not quite sure, he wrote to a friend, perhaps either way was equally valid.

You say that no one can love Herod. I don't know. But I know,

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and you know, that we must love him. I know, and you know, that if I fail to love him, I will hurt myself, that I cannot live fully, and that I must work on myself until I make it possible. I can imagine a man who has all his life been loved by everyone for his love, but who cannot force himself to love Herod, and I can imagine another man who exhausted his strength trying to learn to love Herod, and remained indifferent to those who loved him, who could not learn to love for twenty years but who in the twenty-first year succeeded, and made Herod love him and all the people. I cannot say which of the two is better.[124]

The final conclusion he reached was that all that is necessary was for a man to strive with all his might to overcome his passions and then unreservedly to surrender himself to the spirit of love. Love would then unerringly show the way.

Everything hinges on permitting love to assert itself within, and all that is necessary is to avoid temptations. As soon as the temptations are out of the way, love will assert itself, and will lead a man to act, whether through enlightening the world, or through taming and pacifying a spider. Everything is equally important.[125]

This gave him spiritual courage and saved him from paralysis of will. In 1891 he threw himself into organising relief for those threatened with famine. His friends charged him with having gone back on his own principles after he had declared that good deeds were not a matter of giving money to the hungry, but of loving equally those who were hungry and those who had enough to eat. How could he accept donations and distribute among the needy the wealth "stolen from the poor?" they asked. He joined his critics in denouncing his work, but all the same went on with it unrepentantly and with unabated zeal.

A few years later he organised collection of a fund to help Doukhobor conscientious objectors to emigrate. His "inexcusable crime" again brought upon him an avalanche of criticism by the more ardent of his "followers". In answer he explained to one of them:

What you say is absolutely true. I have thought and still think, have felt and still feel, that it is evil and shameful to ask for material aid for people who are suffering for the sake of the truth. . . . I was opposed to it just as much as I was opposed to giving help in this way during the famine. But what can a man do when told that there are children, old people, and weak pregnant women who are suffering and that he can help them by speaking or acting? He has to speak or act. To consent means to be inconsistent with the expressed opinion that always and in every circumstance true virtue lies in purifying one's own life of sin and in living not for oneself but for God, and that giving help with products of labour which were stolen from the people is a deceit, a pharisaical act, and an endorsement of the Pharisees. But not to consent means to refuse to speak or

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act in a way that would relieve the immediate suffering of the needy. Out of the weakness of my character I always choose the second alternative, though this decision tortures me.[126]

In the statement of principles he felt one must be uncompromising. In practice he allowed himself to be ruled by the promptings of his warm, humanitarian heart and often deliberately acted in a manner contrary to his own theories in order to alleviate suffering whenever an occasion arose, brushing aside the protest of his disciples, and caring little whether he appeared inconsistent to others.

13

In replying to the Holy Synod's Edict excommunicating him in 1901 Tolstoy wrote:

I began by loving my Orthodox faith more than my peace, then I loved Christianity more than my Church, and now I love truth more than anything in the world.[127]

The reply was prefaced with the following from S. T. Coleridge, the poet:

He who begins by loving Christianity better than truth will proceed by loving his own sect or Church better than Christianity, and end in loving himself better than all.

As he advanced in years his relentless search for truth led him gradually to abandon all dogmas. He found it difficult to urge people to accept his religious convictions as he felt that his search for truth was not yet over. The eternal search for truth was the whole meaning and purpose of life, he declared, he had much work ahead of him and many changes in his inner life. Nor did he believe that his path was the only one to the truth he held. He was so convinced, he wrote in a letter to Chertkov, that everybody was bound ultimately to come to the same truth that he had arrived at, that the questions when and how people arrived at it did not interest him. The idea of his becoming the centre of a cult oppressed him, and his increasing sensitiveness to narrowness or intolerance in whatever shape or form in any of his followers in respect of his teaching led him on one occasion to dub "Tolstoyans" as "the most insupportable people", and on another to define a "Tolstoyan" as a man "entirely foreign to my beliefs".

Pointing the danger of developing a self-righteous feeling to one of his followers who was trying to attract people to Tolstoyan communes, he said:

To stand aloof, to shut oneself up in a monastery, surrounded by such angels as oneself, amounts to creating a hot-house and those conditions in

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which it will be easy to be good oneself, but no one else will be warm. Live in the world and be good—that is what is needed.[128]

And again,

Every organisation, every definition, every concentration of the conscience on any condition means the prevalence of anxiety about strengthening love in oneself, self-perfection without good deeds. . . . Every form separates one from the people and consequently from the possibility of good deeds and from invoking love in them. Such are the communes and this is their insufficiency if we are to recognise them as a permanent form. Standing on a pillar and going into the wilderness to live in a commune may be necessary for people for a time, but as a continual form it is obviously sin and foolishness. To live a pure, holy life on a pillar or in a commune is impossible, because man is deprived of one-half of life—communion with the world—without which his life has no sense.[129]

He protested against being set up on a pontifical throne and his opinions being cited to judge others. It was wrong for people, he said, to ask for his solutions to questions and seek his guidance always. In his diary of the year 1907, he wrote: "There never has been such a thing as my teaching. There is only one universal teaching of the truth. . . . This teaching calls man to the recognition of his filial relation to God, and so of his freedom—*the freedom of influence from the world and the slavery to God*—to His will." As soon as a man has realised this he enters into "an immediate communion with God", and then does not need to ask anything from any one (Italics mine).

It is like rowing on a river. . . . So long as a man is not in the middle current . . . he has to row himself, and . . . may be guided by the direction of other men's rowing . . . but the moment we have entered the current, there is no guide, and there can be none. We are all borne down by the power of the current, all of us in one direction, and those who were behind us may be ahead of us.[130]

On the other hand, if a man feels the need to ask whither he should row, it is a sign that he has not yet entered the current. People "who submit to one guide perpetually", therefore, he said, are "wandering in the dark" together with the guide who demands or accepts such submission.

As his long search for truth drew to its close, the old proud "unshakable truths" mellowed and were forgotten. Even his belief in the special significance of Christianity weakened and his ardour for the Gospels cooled when he found that the essential tenets of other faiths were more or less identical. From this he concluded that they were the only God-revealed truths, since they found ready acceptance in everybody's conscience. Everything else that led to conflict and division was the product of men's brains.

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In his *What I Believe* he had stated that the whole purpose of life was obeying the will of God, that He wanted love and unity to grow within; and that "through this growth and through loving everything" he was preparing himself for future life. But when he asked himself whether he really believed in this, he was forced to admit that he did not know.

> Instinctively, I answered that I cannot believe anything so definite. What, then, do I believe? I answered in all sincerity, that I believe one must be good and humble, one must forgive and love. That much I believe with my entire being.[131]

He had started with repudiating the existence of a personal God, "God the Creator, God the thinker, or God who could answer questions." God to him was "He who lives in the consciousness of the people", the "infinite God", a "boundless everything", of which he felt himself a part. Everything in him was close to God, he had said, and he felt Him in everything. But his ever growing surrender to the spirit of truth led him to ask himself whether "in order to unite with the Chinese, the Confucianists, the Buddhists, and our own atheists and agnostics", it was not possible and even necessary "to get along altogether without God".

To his surprise, he at once felt "bored, depressed and frightened". He found that he could not truly love man, without loving the God in man; the sentiment of universal brotherhood becomes meaningful only through God:

> I had no idea why, but I felt that I had suddenly fallen spiritually, and that I had been deprived of all joy and spiritual energy. Only then did I understand that this had happened because I had forsaken God. By thinking and guessing whether there is God, I had rediscovered Him again.[132]

His worship of Truth, by causing him to question the very existence of God who meant everything to him, thus led him back to what Gandhiji later called "God that is Truth and Truth which is God".

14

The chief reason of the perversion of Christianity, held Tolstoy, was that people thought they could accept it without changing their way of life. The life prescribed by Christ's doctrine was so contrary to the one that the vast majority of men had been accustomed to lead, and his teaching was so unlike all their previously held notions that they could not comprehend its full meaning. A verse in St. John runs, "And men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil." Their attachment to their way of life warped their under-

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standing. The doctrine, they said, was Utopian, obedience to its commandments was difficult and it could be practised only in a society whose members were perfect.

It was then that the Church came forward, as a body of men claiming infallibility for themselves, and tried to explain away or falsify the teaching that had been found to be inconvenient to practise. The interpretation which they put forward as the only true interpretation, however, was so opposed to all common sense and what men's hearts knew to be true that the miraculous element was introduced into it to bolster it up. In spite of it men were beginning to understand the meaning of Christ's teaching better and better. This had set up a contradiction between their lives and their Christian consciousness, which was the cause of the suffering that embittered the life of the modern man.

In the economic sphere, for instance, every man had an instinctive feeling that all men have equal rights to the means of life and a certain degree of comfort. Yet he saw society divided into two groups of haves and have-nots. He affirmed his faith in the principles of fraternity, humanity and justice, and yet the oppression of the working class was an indispensable factor in his daily life.

In the political sphere men were taught to tender unquestioning obedience to state laws. They were outraged by the cruel and iniquitous punishment inflicted by the law courts, the immorality and injustice of wrong distribution of land, the folly of maintaining numerous state officials, armies and police, yet they were compelled to support them.

In international relations, the antagonism between the acknowledgment of the Christian law of brotherly love and war was still more glaring. As Christians people professed to love one another, but they were liable to be ordered to march and kill those who had never injured them and whom they in fact even loved.

To shut out this consciousness, which was enough to drive any man to madness or suicide, people stupefied themselves by plunging into all kinds of dissipations—"wine, tobacco, cards, newspaper reading, travel, all manners of shows and pleasures".[133]

Humanity, according to Tolstoy's view of history, has like individuals its ages, each age being distinguished by a life-conception on which its activities during that phase of its existence are based. Every individual forms his own conception of the meaning of his life according to his age which always, though often unconsciously, moulds his conduct. As his outlook on life changes so also his activities resulting therefrom change. It is the same with mankind. It is ever advancing from a lower to a higher conception of life. Thus far there had been three such life conceptions—two of them belonging to the past, the third one to the present, to which the future belonged.

These three life-conceptions are: first, the individual or animal;

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secondly, the social or pagan; and thirdly, the divine or universal life-conception, otherwise known as the spiritual life-conception. According to the first, man's life is centred on the individual and his life's only object is to gratify his desires. This is the life-conception of the savage. Morality does not enter into it. According to the second, man's life is not limited to his own personality, but includes that of the family, the race and finally of the state. According to the third, man's life is confined neither to his personality, nor to the family, the race or the nation, but finds its significance and fulfilment only in the eternal source of life—in God Almighty.

To the savage, who sees life only in terms of his individual self, the highest good would appear to be gratification of his personal desires. He cares nothing for the family, the tribe or the state. His religion consists of attempts to propitiate the gods in his favour. The incentive in the life of a pagan is to advance the interests of his family, tribe, or race, the nation or the state. His religion consists in loyalty and devotion to the Chiefs of his race, his ancestors or the sovereign of his state. But the man who holds the divine life-conception would "regard all life as taking its rise in the eternal life of God". To fulfil His will, he is ready to sacrifice his personal interest, the interest of the family, "or even the exclusive interest of the species" to which he belongs. His impelling motive in life is love; his religion "the worship in deed and in truth of the beginning of all things—of God Himself".

History, Tolstoy affirmed, is but "the transcript" of the transition of mankind from the individual to the social and from the social to the divine life-conception. Tolstoy called it the Christian life-conception, because for himself he had found it expressed with the greatest clearness in Christ's teaching. But it had no personal significance. It embodied the eternal law which is inscribed in men's souls and under which mankind lives, moves and has its being.

A new life-conception is born when mankind enters upon new conditions and it calls for a corresponding change in its life. A grown-up man, the head of family, does not continue to view life or to conduct himself as when he was a child. If a father were to continue to behave like a child, life for him and his family would become hell. Similarly, with the many changes that had occurred—such as growth of population, more frequent intercourse between men and nations, greater control over nature, and the accumulation of knowledge in general—mankind could not afford to live on as before. It had to approximate its outlook and the activities resulting therefrom to the new phase of development on which it had entered as a result of the changed conditions. There could be no retrogression for humanity. Man had outgrown the conception of the family and the state and must willy-nilly move forward to embrace the life-pattern unfolded by the next higher life-conception.

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The social life-conception, which postulates that the meaning of life is contained not in the individual but in a group of individuals, demanded that the individuals should subordinate themselves to and voluntarily sacrifice their interest for those of the group. This conception could vindicate itself only as long as men voluntarily sacrificed their own interest to the interest of the community. But no sooner did men appear who refused to do so voluntarily, and power was used to restrain them, there entered into this life-conception a principle that contradicted it and the structure of life based on it.

For power to attain its object of restraining those who are out to advance their personal interest at the cost of the general good, it is essential that it should vest in men who are utterly selfless and impeccable. But no infallible expedient for entrusting power in the hands of selfless or unerring people only or preventing the possibility of its abuse by those in whose hands it is entrusted has yet been discovered. Those who hold power, consequently, no matter who they are or how they have obtained it—whether with the help of armed force or by inheritance or by election—will, said Tolstoy, by no means be different from their fellow men and will be quite as prone as they to sacrifice the Community's interest to promote their own. In fact they are likely in this respect to be worse than men who do not possess power. For power inevitably corrupts.

Those, on the other hand, against whom power was used, finding that the men who were in authority were moved by considerations not different essentially from theirs, sought whenever they were stronger to overthrow the government by the same means as were used against them, or to get into the government themselves. Consequently, as society became civilised and the anti-social elements were brought under restraint—which is the sole object and justification of power—governments instead of shedding power, as one would have expected them to, became more demoralised owing to the lack of restraint upon them, and in proportion as the tendency of the individuals towards violence decreased their tendency towards violence increased. As Tolstoy put it, "The whole history of two thousand years consists of this alteration of relations between the moral development of the masses and the demoralisation of all the governments".[134]

The inference was clear:

> The evil of violence, passing into the hands of a government, always tends to increase and become greater than that which it is supposed to destroy, while it becomes less and less necessary as the tendency to use violence among the individual members of society progressively diminishes.
>
> Governmental power, even if it suppresses private violence, always introduces fresh forms of violence into the lives of men and does this increasingly as it continues and grows stronger.[135]

Nor was this to be surprised at. It is inevitable from the nature

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of violence itself. Violence, once it is brought into operation, calls into action counter-violence of a still greater magnitude and so the vicious circle goes on.

The basis of all governmental power is the use or the threat of force against those who do not comply with its demands; in other words, physical violence. To maintain a system of life which is advantageous for itself and the ruling class, a government organises a force of armed men trained to act in a body, as ordered, in blind submission to one will. But it is not alone in this. The government of the neighbouring state also is at the same time doing the same within its own borders and for the same reason. An increase in the strength and size of the army in one country, though primarily meant for use against its own nationals for the maintenance of privilege, appears to the other as a menace to its own security and so the race for armaments starts.

The increase of armies arises simultaneously from two causes, each of which reciprocally evokes the other; armies are needed both against enemies at home and to maintain the position of a State against its neighbours. The one conditions the other. The despotism of a government at home increases in proportion to the increase and strengthening of its army and its external successes; and the aggressiveness of governments grows in proportion to the increase of their internal despotism.[136]

As general conscription is the way *par excellence* to get the largest number of soldiers in time of war with the least expense, the admission of force as a means for combating evil had culminated in the system of general military conscription. Armies of men trained to kill as a patriotic duty were organised to sustain the governments in power and war was the inevitable result of the raising of such armies.

Universal military conscription and the resulting menace of war were thus not a political accident due to any passing cause that could be eliminated without changing the inner structure of the life of the individual and society, it was "*an inevitable logical necessity (and). . .final expression of the contradiction inherent in the social conception of life which began when violence became necessary for its maintenance*".[137] The very means adopted to enforce the social life-conception was disintegrating it. The whole rationale of the social life-conception was this that "man recognising the cruelty of the struggle between individuals and the transitoriness of personal life, transfers the aim of his life to an aggregate of human beings". But the result of general military conscription was to bring in the very thing it was intended to eliminate.

After making every sacrifice to release themselves from the cruelty of strife and the transitoriness of their personal lives, (men) are again called upon to bear all the dangers from which they thought they had freed themselves. . . . Besides that, the State itself—for whose sake they had renounced

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their personal interests—is again subjected to the same risks of destruction which in previous times threatened the individual himself.

Governments were to free men from the cruelty of individual strife, to give them security in the performance of a group life. But instead of that they subject men to the same necessity of strife, merely substituting strife with other States for strife with individual neighbours, and the danger of destruction both for the individual and for the State they leave just as it was.[138]

The organisation of life on the basis of violence had thus brought society to a pass which defeated its very object—viz., the securing of peace and happiness for the individual and the family and the social welfare of humanity. A change was inevitable. Modern society had reached the limit of misery. A stage had been reached when the sacrifices demanded by the State had ceased to have a justification from even a practical standpoint.

But it was not only the misery of its position that had brought mankind to that necessity. A more compelling reason was penetration of men's consciousness by the Christian doctrine and its more conscious assimilation. Eighteen centuries of history had made men realise that humanity had outlived the social life-conception and that continuing to live a life based on that conception was no longer consistent with the stage humanity had reached; deliverance from this contradiction was necessary. Men differed as to the way the deliverance would come. But all were agreed that salvation lay in cessation of violence, i.e., in the fulfilment of the law of Christ. Some believed that it would come through the second coming of Christ; some others thought it would come through the Church imbuing all men with Christian virtues by bringing all men within its fold; still others expected that it would come as a result of the triumph of the secular principles of freedom, equality and fraternity. A fourth section held that deliverance would come as a result of a violent revolution, through the abolition of the institutions of private property and of government and establishment of collective ownership of the means of production and distribution, in other words, "by a realisation of one aspect of Christianity in a materialistic frame".

Condemnation of the existing order was thus general and people, even when they regarded themselves as hostile to Christianity, shared the belief that deliverance lay in the application in life of "the Christian teaching or a part of it, in its true sense".

But in spite of the necessity of a change of life acknowledged, proclaimed, and admitted by the wisest of men, the majority of mankind, owing partly to the force of habit and partly to thoughtlessness, continued to base their life on a principle which humanity had outlived. The chief reason why they continued to tolerate the present state of things, however, was that they were helpless prisoners of their own delusion and the false religious teaching that had been instilled into them by the

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Church as the tool of the State. To fill the emptiness of their lives with the satisfaction of superabundant luxury, the ruling class needed to enslave the workers. To sustain this system of enslavement the machinery of state violence was created. The people, as a result of having lived without religion, were hypnotised into believing that their existence could be defended only by state violence; that "bullets, gallows and prisons", by which the power of the State is maintained, were the only means of securing good order in society. This prevented them from comprehending the true cause of their suffering which would enable them to adopt the remedy that would put an end to it. The absence of true religion resulted "in an animal life based on violence", and animal life based on violence made "emancipation from hypnotism and an adoption of true religion more and more impossible". And so the vicious circle was completed.

At first it seemed as if no escape was possible out of this "enchanted circle". Governments, by their very nature, could not guide the people out of it. For them that would be like a man cutting down the branch on which he is sitting. Learned people, who had seen through the deception, were afraid of persecution at the hands of the ruling class, if they dared to expose a fraud which Government protected. Besides, having decided that all religion was an effete error, they had nothing to offer to the people in place of the deception they were expected to destroy. The enslaved masses, on the other hand, while they were ruled by worldly considerations, were loath to bring down upon themselves further suffering by entering on a struggle with the upper classes.

But it was different with the religious people. In every society, however perverted, there always had existed men, affirmed Tolstoy, whose sole aim in life was "to confess by word and deed" what they held to be divine truth, who lived "only to fulfil the will of God by exposing falsehood and by bearing witness to truth". Unknown to fame, suffering persecution, ridicule and contumely, they guarded "with their lives the sacred fire of religion" without which human life could not exist. They were the people "who alone can and will rend asunder that enchanted circle which keeps men bound".[139] All that deterred worldly men from opposing the existing order of society, not only did not matter to them but on the contrary increased their zest for the struggle against falsehood.

> To them suffering and death in this life are as insignificant as are blisters on his hands, or weariness of limbs to a ploughman when he is ploughing a field. . . . However few such men there may be, however humble their social position, however poor in education or ability, as surely as fire lights the dry steppe, so surely will these people set the whole world aflame, and kindle all the hearts of men, withered by long lack of religion, and now thirsting for a renewal of life.

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Quoting an old Hebrew proverb Tolstoy summed up:

'The Soul of man is the lamp of God.' Man is a weak and miserable animal until the light of God burns in his soul. But when that light burns (and it burns only in souls enlightened by religion) man becomes the most powerful being in the world. Nor can this be otherwise, for what then acts in him is no longer *his* strength, but is the strength of God.[140]

This was the grand doctrine of soul-force that Tolstoy's genius evolved from his religious studies and which Gandhiji was to further perfect and practise on a scale undreamt of by the seer of Yasnaya Polyana.

15

In *The Kingdom of God is Within You* Tolstoy worked out the application of the principle of non-resistance to the evil of governmental violence. Planned as an article against military conscription, it grew under his hand and occupied him for nearly four years. The result is the most scathing denunciation ever written of governments and the folly and wickedness of all violence and war, and an almost complete manual of the theory and practice of non-violence as an instrument of social change, which anticipated the movements of civil disobedience and non-cooperation that Gandhiji later launched in South Africa and India.

Tolstoy starts with the thesis that all governments irrespective of their form—whether despotic or the most liberal—are evil and oppressive. "Mere Genghis Khans with a telegraphic equipment," he calls them, using an expression of his contemporary Herzen's. Military conscription and war are inevitable concomitants of State violence. They are bound to exist so long as governments exist that depend for the maintenance of their power on the use of force. Attempts to abolish war by adopting resolutions at Peace Conferences, or by courts of arbitration and such other legal and constitutional means are bound to fail, as no government would agree to any proposal which would really undermine its authority. When he was a child, Tolstoy recalls, he was told that if he wished to catch a bird all he had to do was to put a few grains of salt on its tail. He tried it but soon realised that what he had been told was only a joke. If he could sprinkle salt on a bird's tail he could as well catch it without any effort, for it would mean that the bird could not fly. If, on the other hand, a bird could fly and did not wish to be caught it would not allow salt to be sprinkled on its tail. The proposals to abolish war by Courts of Arbitration, or by adopting resolutions at Peace Conferences in favour of disarmament by the governments concerned belonged to this category. The only escape from the evil of armaments and war

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was to destroy, by withdrawing all cooperation from them, the instruments of violence called government, which under universal military service made every citizen involuntarily an accomplice in all the acts of violence the government inflicts on its subjects, "the rightness of which he does not admit".[141]

Not only was this necessary, maintained Tolstoy, it was inevitable as a result of the advance in the moral consciousness of humanity. There were two ways of combating evil. The first method consists in having a general definition of evil that would be binding on all and to resist that evil by violence; the second method is by not resisting by violence that which is evil. Before Christ propounded his doctrine, men used violence against their fellowmen and assured themselves and others that they were but using it against what was actually evil and was universally acknowledged as such. For this purpose they tried to devise a definition of evil, which should be binding on all. This was done by issuing either laws for which divine origin and sanction were claimed or commands of men to whom infallibility was attributed. So acted Nero and Caligula. They sought to overcome by violence what they believed "necessarily and absolutely" to be evil for the rest of mankind.

But as humanity advanced and society became more complex the difficulty of devising a general definition that would be obligatory on all became apparent. People began to see that no one could be regarded as infallible, no matter with what external authority or sanctity he was invested; that erring men could not become infallible by forming themselves into a body and calling themselves a Senate, an Assembly, a Parliament or by any such name; that violently to resist what any one individual or body of individuals might consider evil was irrational and unwise; that conflict was not diminished by so doing; and that no human wisdom could ever define an infallible standard of evil.

It was then that Christ announced his doctrine which not only declared "that evil should not be opposed by violence which was itself evil", but also gave a new life-conception by which strife could be ended—not by submission to whatsoever those holding power might prescribe but by forbidding the employment of violence by all, including the rulers, against anyone in any circumstances.

But people were not yet ready to receive the new teaching and the old method of defining evils that should be resisted by setting up laws to be enforced by coercion and binding upon all continued to be employed by the majority of mankind—and especially those who had seized power and ruled over others—even after they had nominally accepted Christianity.

The authority that decided what should be considered as evil and suppressed by force varied from time to time. At one time it was

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the Pope, at another an Emperor, then a king and then an assembly of elected men or a whole nation. But there were always men who thought good what the authorities considered evil and who struggled against the authorities with violence such as was employed against them, and with each time that this happened the struggle grew more cruel. And so it went on for eighteen hundred years till a stage was reached when not only had it become evident to all that there could be no "external definition" of evil that could be binding upon all, but those who held power had ceased to believe even in the necessity of producing such a definition and simply said that evil was what they considered or decreed to be evil. Without even a pretence of proof that violence was necessary for the suppression of evil they employed it simply because it was profitable to them or suited their caprice; while those who submitted did so, not from a conviction that what they were asked to submit to was just or moral but because they were caught in a circle of violence from which they did not know how to extricate themselves.

The difficulty of escape was due to the complexity of political violence by which the State protected its power. The machinery by which governmental violence was accomplished was so intricately and cunningly devised, there were so many "instigators, participants and abettors" involved, that no single individual felt himself morally responsible.

> As in a wicker basket all the ends are so carefully interwoven that they cannot be seen, so is it with the responsibility for crime. Individual responsibilities are so manipulated that no man perceives precisely what he is incurring.[142]

Like cog-wheels in a machine they were so enmeshed with one another that no one had any power of initiative or decision left to him. Assassins compel all the witnesses of an assassination to strike the body of the victim "with a view to dividing the responsibility among the greatest number possible". Similarly the authorities took care to involve as many citizens as possible in the commission of the crimes which it was in their interest to have committed. "Some demand the crime, some propose it, some determine it, some confirm it, some order it, some execute it".[143] The whole process is run through so complex a transmission that the consequences of their actions are hidden from men's eyes; each thinks that responsibility rests on someone other than himself and so they all continue to participate in the evil of State violence "notwithstanding the consciousness of its immorality".

With a penetration and insight that has seldom been equalled in our times and never excelled, Tolstoy went on to lay bare the anatomy of State violence, the dynamics of its manipulation and the fourfold technique of hypnotisation, bribery, intimidation and the

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employment of military force by which governments had rendered themselves impregnable to all external threats to their authority and made the people consenting instruments in their own enslavement. He rejected both the method of revolution and of constitutional struggle, to combat governmental oppression, as being equally ineffective, irrational and harmful. Attempts by force to overthrow a government that had become oppressive and to replace it by another which would have no need to employ force held out little hope of deliverance. Governments were well equipped to meet force by force. If unsuccessful, the violence of the revolutionary and the anarchist provided them with a convenient excuse to further increase their defences; if successful, it only replaced one tyranny by another which might be worse. His reading of history had convinced Tolstoy that in every revolution, no matter what the political complexion of the revolution, the people were the losers. Socialists, Communists and individualists, however much they differed from one another, had this in common—they had no other means other than violence to oppose what they considered to be evil, and so

> whichever of these parties might triumph it would have to employ not only all the existing methods of violence but also to devise new ones in order to . . . maintain its power. Other men would be enslaved and forced to do other things, but the violence and oppression would be the same or even more cruel, since hatred of one another would be increased by the struggle and intensified forms of oppression would have to be devised.
>
> This has been the case after all revolutions, all attempts at revolution, all conspiracies and all forcible changes of governments. Every conflict merely strengthens the means of oppression in the hands of those who for the time being are in power.[144]

A communist revolution would further, if successful, invade the only sphere of human life that had hitherto escaped encroachment by governmental power—the sphere of private life and labour. "Thanks to the efforts of Communists and Socialists", warned Tolstoy, this sphere was now

> being gradually encroached on, so that labour and recreation, housing, dress and food, will all (if the hopes of the reformers are fulfilled) gradually be prescribed and allotted by the governments.[145]

For men with a social life-conception there appeared to be no escape out of this hopeless impasse and there was none. They hated the oppression, the inequality, the class distinctions and the cruelty of the existing order but they could not make up their minds to break away from the system that supported it all. They would withdraw from it, they said, if everybody else did the same. But it was no use an individual doing it all by himself; he would suffer without doing good to anybody or anything.

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The *summum bonum* of a man of social life-conception being his personal welfare, he could do nothing else. "For his personality it seems better to submit and he does so. . . . He has no principle for the sake of which he alone could resist violence. And those in authority will never allow him to unite with others".[146] To be able to stand up against a government and offer resistance to its authority which no power can subdue a man must have something which he would under no circumstances surrender. Deliverance was possible only by embracing of a higher conception of life which in liberating those who accepted it would also free the world from all external authority.

A man has only to understand . . . that his life does not belong to himself or his family or the State but to Him who sent him into the world, and that he must therefore fulfil not the law of his personality or family or State but the infinite law of Him from Whom he has come—and he will feel himself absolutely free from all human authorities and will even cease to regard them as able to trammel anyone.

Let a man but realise that the purpose of his life is to fulfil the law of God, and that law will dominate him and supplant all other laws, and by its supreme dominion will in his eyes deprive all human laws of their right to command or restrict him.[147]

Such a man would regard the law of love implanted in the soul of every individual as his sole guide. He might be tortured, imprisoned, deprived of all his worldly possessions but no physical suffering or threat of external harm can force him into committing an action which is contrary to his conscience. With his different conception of life, he would welcome rather than fear "those deprivations, sufferings, or threats of deprivation and suffering", by which a man of the social conception of life "is reduced to the necessity of obedience", for he knows they cannot affect his true welfare, which consists in the consciousness that he is fulfilling the will of God, but on the contrary will and can only increase it, when they are endured in the course of doing His will. "The divine principle that dwells within him" is subject to no external circumstances, it never fails those who rely on it.

Tolstoy likened people enmeshed in the social life-conception to bees in a beehive, hanging from a branch, in a cluster. The hive must be shifted to another place at the hiving time. "Each bee knows this and wishes to change its position but not one of them will do so till the whole swarm rises, and the swarm cannot rise because one bee clings to another and so they all continue to hang together; whereas all that is needed to change a solid mass of bees into a flying swarm is for one bee, that is able, to spread its wings and fly away, when the second, the third and the hundredth will follow." Similarly, all that was needed to break through the magic circle of social life was that one man should adopt the Christian view-point and begin to frame his life

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accordingly. Others would then of themselves follow in his footsteps.

But it was objected that this method was too slow; the deliverance of the masses would come, not through the liberation of each individual by the adjustment of his way of life to his inner light but spontaneously through a violent reconstruction of society. This argument, said Tolstoy, was tantamount to saying that to reach the place where they all desired to go no one need stir from his place; they would collectively be carried there upon a magic carpet. Or, to vary the metaphor, to light a fire it was not necessary to ignite any individual piece of coal but to arrange the lumps of coal in a certain pattern and thus the fire would be made. On this preposterous premise an economic theory had been built which in a nut-shell meant: "The worse the better; the worse the situation, the better the prospect." Any effort on the part of the individuals to ameliorate their condition was not only unnecessary but harmful. The more the concentration of capital and the oppression of the workers, the nearer their deliverance. Therefore any individual effort to lessen their misery retarded the coming of the millennium. In regard to international politics, according to this doctrine, the rapid increase of armies and the increase in the death-dealing power of the engines of destruction was highly desirable as it would automatically bring about a general disarmament. In regard to the government it was declared that the greater its authority the better it would be. Its interference should, hence, be invoked even in the domain of private life. In other words, to remove the sufferings under which people groaned they should depend for relief upon the very authority which was the cause of their suffering and thereby augment its power to which they should continue to submit. And the amazing part of it was that this propaganda for the prolongation of slavery was carried on not only by the authorities, who profited by it, but socialists, who claimed to be champions of freedom.

> Of all human errors this is the one that most hinders men from attaining the aim towards which they strive. Men do all sorts of very different things to reach their aim, except the one simple and direct thing that is within the reach of everyone. They devise most cunning means of changing the conditions that burden them, except the very simple one that each man should refrain from doing things that produce those conditions.[148]

Then there were the Liberals who advocated "gradualism" or the method of carrying on the struggle against the government on the basis of whatever laws the government itself may make, "conquering constitutional rights bit by bit".[149] This method was ineffectual and irrational because a government holding in its grasp the whole power would never let people, who submitted to it and acted under its guidance, do anything that would endanger its existence. But more than that it was harmful, as cooperation of honest men with the

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government lent it prestige which it would have lacked if it were composed of coarse elements only—"men of violence, self-seekers, and flatterers".[150] In order to be able to function, these "highly enlightened and honest" people were forced to enter into compromises and were imperceptibly led to believe that "for a good end one may swerve somewhat from truth in word and deed". Once on that slippery slope there was no stopping. "Retreating farther and farther away from the demands of conscience," they

> fall at last into a position of complete dependency on the government. They receive rewards and salaries from it, and continuing to imagine that they are forwarding liberal ideas, become the humble servants and supporters of the very order against which they set out to fight.[151]

Worse than the political was the moral harm that resulted from it. Accomplishment of violence sanctioned by the higher and carried out by the lower cadres of the government was made possible only through the "torpor of conscience" induced by auto-suggestion in the case of the one and hypnotisation in that of the other, as a result of which those who sanctioned violence ceased to feel personal responsibility for what they made others do, while those who carried out their commands were hypnotised into the belief that it was their duty servilely to submit to those above them. Both were conditioned to think that they were no longer ordinary human beings but special people having "no more ordinary human duties, but only the duties of the class to which they belong". This abnormal state in which men were unable to weigh their actions, but simply acted under the suggestion that had been conveyed to them, could last only so long as there was complete regimentation of public opinion. But there inevitably arrives a stage when, "as a result of the diffusion of the truth that a few people have realised", men begin to doubt the correctness of the beliefs to which they have been conditioned. If in such a juncture even a few came out, boldly expressed their opinion as to the wickedness of what the authorities demanded, and acted accordingly, it would break the spell "under the influence of which they act and such evil deeds would not be done".[152] The world situation, Tolstoy urged, was ripe for such action. The time was past when good men went forth to do violence and murder and suffered no twinge of doubt or remorse. They now knew, or at least suspected, the real reason why they did such things. "They may close their eyes and try to silence their consciences, but neither those who commit such outrages, nor those who order them can any longer fail to discern the significance of their acts". Everything, therefore depended on development of this consciousness among the people. "Conscience may slumber for a time, but it is not dead, and in spite of suggestion and auto-suggestion, it still whispers; yet a little while and it will awaken."

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But the Liberals insisted that any individual profession of the truth which might happen to be incompatible with the existing order was harmful, "because it provokes, on the part of the government, an opposition which prevents the individual from continuing efforts which may be of utility to society".[153] The principal activity of a man who wished to serve the world and to improve the conditions of his kind should, therefore, be directed "not to teaching and profession of truth" but to the dissemination of socialistic ideas, "serving the government and introducing liberal and progressive principles"[154] into it, without altering its structure or that of society. According to this convenient theory it was unnecessary for a man to profess what he held to be the truth "which would inevitably require him to apply it in his life or at least to refrain from actions contrary to that truth". One could continue to serve the government one knew to be evil, or even strengthen its authority; profit by the capitalist system, even though he considered it as wrong; participate in judicial proceedings by serving as a solicitor, judge, juryman or lawyer, "or indeed lie" and in general behave "as a scoundrel"; in short one could, according to this theory, "remain a landowner, a merchant, a manufacturer, a judge, a functionary paid by the government, a soldier, an officer, and at the same time be humanitarian, socialist, and revolutionary".[155]

This was the limit of hypocrisy and more harmful than naked cynicism. Those men who did evil, knowing not the truth, injured only themselves and the victims of their evil, but men who knew good, yet pursued the evil "wearing all the while the mantle of hypocrisy", did wrong not only against themselves and their victims, but also against thousands of other men who were deceived by the falsehood under which they concealed the wrong.

> Thieves, robbers, murderers, rogues, who commit acts which they themselves, as well as other men, know to be evil, serve as a warning to show men what is evil, and make them hate it. Those, however, who steal, rob, torture, and murder, justifying themselves by pretended religious, scientific, or other motives, like the landowners, merchants, factory-owners, and government servants of the present time, by provoking imitation, injure not only their victim but thousands and millions of men who are corrupted by their influence and who become so blinded that they cannot distinguish the difference between good and evil.
>
> One fortune acquired . . . in any of these ways, not only permitted, but approved by the leaders of society, when, furthermore, it is supported by a show of charity, surely demoralises men more than millions of thefts, frauds, or robberies,—sins committed against the laws of the land and subject to judicial prosecution.[156]

No improvement in the condition of mankind was possible while men continued to hide the truth from themselves, or until they recognised

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that truth was "the only bond by which man may be united",[157] and "to profess and to act in obedience to (it) is more important than all things else".[158] It was the grossest delusion to think, said Tolstoy, that men could be delivered from the violence and oppression of governments, while they continued to live a life which was made possible only by the use of violence. Only refusal to participate in all state activities based on violence, or to accept any benefits accruing from such participation could free them from fetters by which they seemed to be permanently bound. If all mankind but resolved to live according to the true precepts of Jesus, as set down in the Sermon on the Mount, it would make government unnecessary and impossible. For, this was the one thing that no government could subdue. Governments knew how to deal with external foes but they did not know how to dispose of those men who did not contend with them but refused to participate in their system of political violence on conscientious and religious grounds. They destroyed the foundations of governments from inside without a struggle, and to punish them only helped the diffusion of the consciousness from which such refusals sprang. That was why socialists, communists and anarchists "with their bombs, riots and revolutions" were not dreaded so much by the authorities as these people.

16

In presenting his thesis of Christian anarchism and non-violent non-cooperation with the State as the only way of deliverance from the evil of oppression and violence that afflicted society, Tolstoy left unanticipated or unanswered hardly any conceivable objection. It was contended by the defenders of the existing order that until all nations and all members of each nation became non-violent and there were no more bad men in society, the State as a form of social life was indispensable for the protection of the good from the wicked. This argument, said Tolstoy, assumed that those who attained and held power were the better people, and that there was no means other than counter-violence by which violence could be overcome. Both these assumptions were false. In the first place, to acquire and retain power one must love power, i.e., violence, which is the antithesis of moral force. Therefore from its very definition, only those men would seek or accept power who were morally inferior. "The more wicked are always those in power. History is but the recital of the usurpation of power by the bad over the good". Secondly, violence was not annihilated by the counter-violence of the State, but in spite of it and as a counter-manifestation through those men who, having obtained power by violence, were led by experience to recognise its utter futility and so became incapable of using it any more. "Violence ceases not because the best

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elements in society seize power and employ it against their subjects to make them better by means of counter-violence but as a result of penetration of men's consciousness by the Christian conception of life".

Power attracted to itself the worst elements in society. The struggle to attain it brought "the grossest, the cruelest and the least Christian elements" to the top. But having attained their cherished goal of power, glory and riches, these people soon became disillusioned and realised the vanity of it all.

> The attractions of power and all it brings . . . seem to men really worth struggling for only until they are won, for no sooner does a man hold them within his grasp than they manifest their own emptiness and gradually lose their charm, like clouds lovely and picturesque in outline seen from afar, but no sooner is one enveloped in them than their beauty vanishes.[159]

Just as in a sugar refinery, when the pan is heated, dregs bubble up to the top as scum, where after having absorbed from the surface what they need for their saturation they again settle down as sludge—a comparatively harmless substance and not without some use—leaving the syrup cleaner and purer, so those, who had struggled for riches and power, but "particularly those who have inherited them", became in the process less greedy and less cruel.

Having learned by experience, sometimes in one generation, sometimes in several, how utterly worthless are the fruits of violence, men abandon those vices acquired by the passion for riches and power, and growing more humane, they lose their positions, being crowded out by others who are less Christian and more wicked; whereupon they fall back into a stratum, which, though lower in the social scale, is higher in that of morality, thus increasing the mean level of Christian consciousness. But straightway, the worse, the rougher, and less Christian elements rise to the surface, and being subject to the same experience as their predecessors, after one or two generations these men, too, recognise the hollowness of violent ambitions, and being penetrated with the spirit of Christianity, fall back into the ranks of the oppressed. These are in turn replaced by new oppressors, less despotic than the former, but rougher than those whom they oppress. So that although the authority is to all outward seeming unchanged, yet the number of those who have been driven by the exigencies of life to adopt the Christian life-conception increases with every change of rulers. They may be more harsh, more cruel, and less Christian than their subjects; but always men less and less violent replace their predecessors in authority.

In this way

> Violence chooses as its instruments the worst elements of society; men who gradually become leavened and softened and changed for the better are returned into society.[160]

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The danger of which the defenders of State rights made a bugbear was thus not removed by the application of State violence; State violence was itself the real evil which was being gradually and inevitably losing its virulence through attenuation by a process which is inherent in the nature of things. The utmost that could be conceded was that if State violence were abolished "violence would perhaps be committed by people other than those who previously committed it". But the total violence, Tolstoy maintained, "would not be increased by the passing of power from one set of men to another".[161] The proposition, therefore, that since there will always be wicked men, coercion by the State will be necessary to restrain them, and therefore the institution of the State could never be dispensed with, was untenable.

Again, it was argued that if it was true that State violence would come to an end only when those in power became "Christian enough" to renounce power of their own accord and no one else was found willing to take their place, we might have to wait till the Greek Kalends.

This argument, Tolstoy pointed out, unwarrantably assumed that the transition from one life-conception to another was accomplished by the conversion of each man "separately and by an inner spiritual path" only. This process is necessarily slow. But besides it there was another process at work all the time—the external. Men assimilated a truth not alone because they came to realise it through "prophetic insight" or through individual experience, but the truth having once been established, it was accepted spontaneously by those who dwelt on a lower plane of intelligence, because of their faith in those who had "received it and *incorporated it in their lives*". [162]

It is only in the beginning that men accept the new truth and obey its dictates "by degrees and one by one". After a certain point in this process of slow diffusion is reached, the new truth is accepted "not through intuition, and not by degrees, but generally, and at once, and almost involuntarily".[163]

Nor was the mass of the men standing on a lower plane of development altogether a hindrance in this process of the realisation of the Christian system of life as the defenders of the social life-conception tried to make out. Its inertia acted like the ballast with which every ship is laden for stability so that she will not be at the mercy of every wind and tide. It prevented too frequent and rapid social changes, untested by human experience. At the same time it provided the momentum which enabled humanity to retain for a long time every new truth that had stood the test of human experience. Lacking the faculty of attaining the truth by its own intuition, this inert mass was always swayed by public opinion, which "does not need hundreds and thousands of years for its formation and growth, for it possesses an infectious quality of acting on people and attracting collective masses with

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great rapidity".[164] Progression from one system of life to another was thus accomplished

not . . . as the sand glides through the hour-glass, grain by grain, until all has run out, but rather as water which enters an immersed vessel, at first slowly, at one side, then, borne down by its own weight, suddenly plunges, and at once fills completely.[165]

It was further argued that men could not dispense with the use of violence while they were surrounded by "those who commit violence". So long as uncivilised nations threatened the security of peaceful ones, it was said, the State with all its alleged evils could not be abolished. In answer Tolstoy pointed out that no people was ever conquered by another by violence *alone*. "Nations and races may be destroyed by violence. . . They cannot be subdued."[166] There was no instance in history of subjugation by violence of a nation whose "education, traditions, and even religious training" all tended to "glorify resistance to the conqueror and love of liberty as the loftiest of virtues,"[167] or of the suppression of their way of life as a result of such subjugation. Whenever "the victors stood on a lower plane of civilisation than the conquered, they always adopted the habits and customs of the latter."[168] Did not captive Greece make captive its Roman captors? As against it, whenever a people had accepted the religion of their conquerors, "became Christians or turned Mohammedans", it was not because it was made obligatory by those in power ("Violence often produces quite opposite result") but because they were dissatisfied with or had no faith in their own. Invariably they were attracted to the religion of their adoption or to the way of life based upon it, by something which, they felt, their own religion lacked.

Nor was savagery confined to backward or "uncivilised" nations so-called; advanced nations could be as savage, perhaps more. It was frivolous to talk about the danger threatened by the natives of Dahomey, the Zulus, for instance, and others "who live far away, and who have no intention of attacking us; or about the few thousands of malefactors, thieves, and murderers—men whom we have helped to demoralise, and whose numbers are not decreased by all our courts, prisons, and executions".[169] The existing system was sustained not by force, but by public opinion. "Violence can never suppress that which was countenanced by general custom." The failure to suppress the vendetta and the practice of duelling in certain countries even by the severest of penalties was an instance in point. "If public opinion would but frown upon violence it would destroy all its power." The defenders of the existing social system were, therefore, "self-deceived" when they maintained that abolition of the State and its replacement by the moral influence of public opinion would leave men helpless against the evil elements. Instead of providing protection violence, on the contrary, deprived men of the "only possible

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chance of an effectual defence by the establishment and propagation of the Christian principle of life" thereby weakening and destroying that which it wished to support.[170]

Some people asked what security there would be for them when the existing order was swept away? What kind of laws would take the place of those under which they were now living? Not until they knew exactly how their life would be ordered would they take a single step towards making a change, they said.

To this Tostoy's reply was :

> We cannot know the conditions of the new order of things, because we have to work them out for ourselves. The meaning of life is to search out that which is hidden, and then to conform our activity to our new knowledge.[171]

Those who feared to make an effort to escape from the existing conditions that were fatal to them, because the future was obscure, he said, were behaving like "the passengers of a sinking ship who crowd into the cabin, and refuse to leave it, because they have not the courage to enter the boat that would carry them to the shore", or, like the sheep "who in fear of the fire that has broken out into the farmyard, huddle together in a corner and will not go out through the open gate".[172]

Finally, it was objected that it was impossible to follow the teaching of Christ, as implicit obedience to it would end by destroying life. The misapprehension as to the practicality of Christ's doctrine, answered Tolstoy, was due to mistaking the Christian standard of perfection for a rule of conduct. There were two methods of providing moral guidance for a seeker after truth. One was pointing out the objects by the roadside which would enable him to shape his course; the other consisted in indicating the direction by a compass he carried, "on which he sees one invariable direction and consequently is made aware of every divergence from it". The first method, the method of prescriptive morality, lays down certain external rules of conduct in the form of categorical "do's" and "dont's"; the other indicates "a perfection man can never reach", but which nevertheless he ceaselessly and consciously strives to attain. "An ideal is set before him which will tell him whenever he deviates from the right road and the extent of such deviation". A rule of conduct is based on the requirements of law which everybody can and must conform to in their completeness at the risk of incurring a penalty. The Christian teachi sets forth "the infinite perfection which it is natural for all men to aspire to, whatever their shortcomings might be"; the test of its fulfilment consists in ceaseless and ever growing aspiration towards it.

Tolstoy compared a man who accepts an external law to a man standing in the light thrown by a lantern fixed to a post. "He stands

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in the light of his lantern and it is light around him, but he has no place to which to advance". But a man who has accepted Christ's teaching is "like one who carries a lantern before him on a pole: the light is always before him, and by lighting up fresh ground which attracts him, always invites him to advance".[173]

Those who judged the Christian doctrine by the standard of a state or civil law imagined that the perfection of which Christ spoke was attainable in this life and so were led to ask what would happen if it were fulfilled, forgetting that Christ promulgated his doctrine knowing that

complete perfection will never be attained but that striving towards full and infinite perfection will constantly increase the good of men, and so that good can be endlessly increased. . . . *Human life is an asymptote of divine perfection towards which it always tends and approaches, but which can only be reached by it in infinity.*[174]

Far from taking no account of the limitations of human nature, it was precisely because he was fully aware of them that Christ presented to men his standard of divine perfection. He recognised that man is neither wholly angel nor wholly brute but an odd mixture of the two. Knowing that the force of his animal nature cannot be abolished and will always exercise its sway, he by communicating to him a sense of his divine perfection introduced a counter-force to guide the current of his life between these two extremes, as in a parallelogram of forces with the force of his animal nature representing one side and the consciousness of his divine perfection the other. The fulfilment of man's life consists in striving ceaselessly to free himself from his animal nature and to increase the divine element in him so as to come as close as possible to God-like perfection. Rules of conduct represent the resultant of the forces composing the parallelogram at a particular stage of man's moral and spiritual development.

In the Sermon on the Mount Christ had set forth the eternal ideals. The Commandments indicate the minimum standard that mankind at its present stage of development can and must attain. Thus the ideal is to bear no malice and to love all men. The Commandment which forbids him to offend his neighbours is one which a man who is striving to attain this ideal "must do no less than obey". The Commandment which enjoins purity in married life and forbids adultery lays down the minimum that a man who accepts this ideal must conform to. In the same way the ideal to do no violence whatever requires us to endure injuries with patience, and the ideal of loving one's enemies to at least refrain from injuring them and to treat all fellow creatures with equal consideration. But even these Commandments do not exhaust the doctrine. They are but "mile-stones on the road to infinite perfection towards which humanity is struggling. They must necessarily be followed by "higher and still higher ones" as man moves towards

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perfection, "ever aspiring and drawing nearer to it, although it can be reached only in the infinity."

The Positivists had arbitrarily set bounds to the possibilities of human nature and gratuitously assumed that to take literally the five Commandments was absurd; they must be trimmed down to practical proportions, they said. It would be enough, for instance, "if instead of giving all one has to the poor, one gave a portion of one's possessions in charity; instead of remaining unmarried avoided a dissolute life," and so on. This, Tolstoy said, would be "like telling a man who is crossing a swift river that no one can cross a river by steering against the current but that he should direct his boat in a straight line towards the point he wishes to reach", whereas in order to land at a given point one must steer beyond it. "To lower the standard of an ideal means not only to lessen the chances of attaining perfection, but to destroy the ideal itself."[175] The ideal that urges mankind forward, Tolstoy affirmed, is not an "invention" of man's brain; it is something that is implanted in his soul. It is this ideal of "utter and infinite perfection" that moves mankind to high endeavour. A workable degree of perfection would fail to fire the souls of men.

Tolstoy also critically examined the view advanced by the Positivists that "enlightened self-interest" inevitably led to love of humanity and that love of humanity based on that concept could take the place of the spiritual doctrine of "love of Principle of all things".

Mankind, according to the Positivists, had in its development passed from the religious to the metaphysical and had now entered upon the scientific phase. The first two phases were based on superstition and abstract speculation respectively. The latest phase was the phase of enlightenment, being based on positive knowledge which would deliver mankind from ignorance, superstition and fear, and inaugurate the era of peace with progress.

The Christian doctrine of loving and serving God and (as the natural consequence of such love and service) of loving and serving one's neighbour, the Positivists objected, was a "mystical and vague" doctrine—at once "confused and arbitrary". The doctrine of love of humanity rested on a firmer basis, and was altogether more intelligible. It was natural for every man to love himself, his family and his people, they argued. Therefore, it should also be to his advantage to extend this feeling to "the universal entity—mankind, that all men may live for humanity, as they have lived for the family and for the State". Love of humanity should, therefore, be substituted for the love and service of God.

What these protagonists of scientific brotherhood failed to take into consideration, commented Tolstoy, was that love is not an abstract hypothesis; it cannot be evoked by theorising. It is an "innate sentiment", which must have a "real object to which it can attach

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itself". But "the entity termed humanity" is not a "real object", but an abstraction.

> We do not know humanity in the concrete, nor can we fix its limits. Humanity is a fiction and therefore it cannot be loved.[176]

The advocates of the Socialist brotherhood felt the need to widen the scope of love of man, but their attempt to widen the sphere of love, based on personal or social-life conception, turned it into an abstraction which weakened and ultimately destroyed its very basis. Love of man founded on a personal and social-life conception could not bear expansion beyond a certain point. But love founded on the divine life conception was not restricted "to self, nation or even humanity", it comprehended every living creature.

> It recognises the possibility of an indefinite expansion of the kingdom of love, but its object is not to be found outside itself, . . . but in itself, in its personality—a divine personality, whose essence is the very love which needed a wider sphere. [177]

Again, the social doctrine assumed that man's nature is essentially animal, which he has to curb and bring under "the visible law of the family, of the society and of the state". Christ's doctrine, on the other hand, requires a man to live up to his nature, which in its essence is divine, and "make it subject to nothing, neither to his own animal nature, nor to the demands of the family or those of the State". In the social-life conception the necessity of widening the domain of love is postulated as a hypothesis necessary for the salvation of the individual. According to Christ's teaching it is not a hypothesis built in answer to a necessity, but the inherent quality of the soul. In short the Christian doctrine teaches man that

> the essence of his soul is love, that his wellbeing may be traced not to the fact that he loves this object or that one, but to the fact that he loves the principle of all things—God, whom he recognises in himself through love, and will by the love of God love all men and all things.[178]

Tolstoy branded as a "new and scientific form of hypocrisy" the argument of the materialists based on necessitarianism that man cannot change his life as he is not a free agent. Man's behaviour is conditioned by his material environment, the social scientists contended. Whatever he may do is determined always by precedent causes. To attempt changing the external conditions by changes in the lives of individuals, therefore, was like a man lifting himself by his boot-straps. Tolstoy admitted that in his actions man is not always free. But one freedom he always has—the freedom to adopt or not to adopt certain truths already known to him. Therefore, even if he be not free in his acts, in regard to "the cause of his acts," which consists in the recognition

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or non-recognition of truth, he is still free. The admission or the denial of a certain truth does not depend upon external conditions, but on "certain . . . qualities" that man finds within himself and "which escape recognition".[179] It is a faculty inherent in the soul, and is the cause of all the manifestations in man's life. A man acts in a particular way, because he feels that at the moment that course is the right one, or because he formerly thought so and is now impelled to act as he does through the force of habit. Therefore, even if, at a particular point of time, he be not free to act in the way he wishes to, he is yet free to work towards the removal of the cause or causes preventing his acting in that way.

If man were utterly ignorant of truth, Tolstoy went on to point out, there would be no freedom. "He would not even have any conception of liberty". Similarly he would not be free if he had full knowledge of truth. He would inevitably be led by it. The question of choice arises only when there is an admixture of error. Man is not a static but an ever-growing, ever-evolving being by virtue of his inborn faculty of recognising truth which in its turn determines his future line of action. As he advances in life he has a fuller and still fuller glimpse of truth.

> Some truths are so familiar to him that they have become the unconscious springs of action; others are only dimly revealed to him; again others, though still unfamiliar, are revealed to him so plainly that they force themselves upon his attention, and inevitably, in one way or another, he is obliged to consider them. He cannot ignore them, but must either recognise them or repudiate them.[180]

To the extent that man recognises and becomes a willing instrument of the eternal laws of God he realises freedom. By shutting his eyes to these truths he becomes a slave. For instance, a liquor addict may lack the strength, as a result of his past habit, to resist the temptation to drink, but he is free to admit to himself that drinking is an evil and this may give him gradually—according to the degree of his conviction—the strength to overcome it. But if he refuses to recognise the evil as evil and tries to justify it to himself and to others, his addiction will grow and the very possibility of his deliverance will be destroyed. The truth will impel him in either case, irrespective of his recognition or non-recognition of it—like steam in a locomotive, if he willingly cooperates with it; like a slave-driver, lash in hand, if he resists.

> Not only does truth point out the direction a man's life *should* take, but it opens the only road he *can* take. Hence, all men will invariably, free or not, follow the road of truth;—some willingly, doing the work they have set themselves to do; others involuntarily, by submitting in spite of themselves to the law of life. It is in the power of choice that a man's freedom lies.[181]

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The man who consecrates his life to sensual acts is ever performing acts that depend on temporary causes beyond his control . . . he is not the creator of life, but its slave. But the man who devotes his life to the acknowledgment and practice of the truth revealed to him unites himself with the source of universal life, and accomplishes not personal, individual acts, that depend on the conditions of time and space, but acts that have no causes, but are in themselves causes of all else, and have an endless and unlimited significance.[182]

But what would happen to the world if the existing order of life based upon violence were destroyed? people asked. The moment they thought of taking the plunge, fear, "the fear of emptiness, space, freedom" seized them. They were afraid to venture forth alone. This was, however, a prospect, Tolstoy urged, which all those pioneers and benefactors of humanity, whose memory mankind cherishes and honours, had to brave.

Had Columbus reasoned thus he never would have weighed anchor. It was madness to attempt to cross an unknown ocean, to set sail for a country whose very existence was doubtful. But he discovered a new world through this madness.[183]

If only each man tried to understand and recognise the truth "which is pleading to be admitted into our hearts", recognised it and fearlessly professed it, he would find that countless other men were in the same position as himself, fearing like himself to stand alone in its recognition, and waiting only to hear its avowal by others before taking the plunge themselves.

The fear of the unknown future would, said Tolstoy, have some justification if the present were sufficiently safe. But, as anybody could see, the world was ailing. Unless things were radically altered, it could not live long. It was as if a man who dwelt in a dilapidated old house, knowing that it might tumble down any moment, were to insist that he would vacate it and have it rebuilt only if it was guaranteed that a new structure would be raised in its place which would suit his convenience better. Provided the materials and the workmen were ready, it was but reasonable to expect that a new house would be built in which he would be able to live without danger to his life. On the other hand, if nothing were done, it was not only probable but certain that the old house would one day fall crushing to death all those who dwelt in it. It was thus their inertia and their timidity only that led men to cling to what had already been found wanting, and suffer. If they applied even one hundredth part of the energy they used in working for external changes in which they were not free to those in which they were free, the system of life which tormented them, and which threatened them with still greater suffering, would be destroyed with so little effort on their part that it would astonish them.

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As one shake is sufficient to precipitate into crystals a liquid saturated with salt, so at the present time it may be that only the least effort is needed in order that the truth, already revealed to us, should spread among hundreds, thousands, millions of men, and a public opinion become established in conformity with the existing consciousness, and the entire social organisation become transformed. It depends upon us to make this effort.[184]

It is scarcely possible in a summary, however detailed, to convey an idea of the burning earnestness, persuasive eloquence and wealth of argument with which Tolstoy presented his thesis. However high-placed an individual might be, he urged, whatever his status in life or the power with which he was invested, two things were certain (1) that death could overtake him at any moment and deprive his mode of life of all significance and (2) that all his undertakings were transitory, bound to disappear leaving no trace behind. But no matter with what lies they had been stupefied and by what hypnotic spell or auto-suggestion their reason had been bound, nothing could take away from them the clear certainty of this simple truth, that "no external efforts can safeguard our life which is inevitably attended by unavoidable sufferings and ends in yet more inevitable death, which may come to each of us at any moment".[185] There was no escaping from the conclusion consequently that the true significance of man's life lies neither in his "personal, physical existence", nor in any "worldly institution or organisation", but in doing that which He who has sent us into this world, and to whom we shall shortly return demands of us. Were they doing what He required of them? Tolstoy asked:

> Are you doing right when, as landowner or manufacturer, you take the products of the labour of the poor, and establish your life on this spoliation; or when, as governor or judge, you do violence in condemning men to death; or when as soldier you prepare for war, for fighting, robbery and murder, —are you doing right?[186]

They were of course a part of society, of the State. But if as a part of the State they had their duties, had they not higher duties in consequence of their being also "a partaker of the infinite life of God's universe"?[187] The obligations of citizenship must, therefore, be subject to the "higher and eternal obligations" on their part in the ever lasting life of God; they must not contradict them.

A man surrounded by temptations, so strong that he feels helpless and with commitments and family obligations which he cannot repudiate, might not be able to distribute all his possessions to the poor, or throw up the job in the State he is holding, or refuse military service, or refuse to sit on a jury, when called upon by the State.

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I do not say that if you are a landowner you are bound immediately to give your land to the poor; if you are a capitalist to give your money or your factory to the workpeople; if you are a tsar, minister, official, judge, or general, that you should at once renounce your advantageous position; or if you are a soldier (if, that is to say, you occupy the position on which all violence is based) that you should immediately refuse military service despite all the danger of doing so.[188]

But this much all could do—"to recognise the truth and not to lie".

You can refrain from affirming that you continue to be a landowner or factory owner, merchant, an artist, an author, because you are thus useful to men; from declaring that you are a Governor, an Attorney-General, a Czar, not because it is agreeable (to you) . . . but for the good of men; from saying that you remain a soldier, not through fear of punishment, but because you consider the army (to be) indispensable for the protection of men's lives. To keep from speaking thus falsely before yourself and others—this you are always able to do, and not only able, but in duty bound to do, because in this alone—in freeing yourself from falsehood and in working out the truth—lies the highest duty of your life. And do but this and it will be sufficient for the situation to change at once of itself.[189]

Seeing clearly and acknowledging to oneself the truth is half the battle, Tolstoy pleaded. "When a change takes place in men's thought, action follows the direction of thought as inevitably as a ship follows the direction given by its rudder".[190] God does not require from men what is unreasonable and impossible, "He demands of us only what is reasonable and possible . . . to recognise and profess the truth, revealed to us, which it is always in our power to do".[191]

"This is the whole purpose of life to help promote the coming of the kingdom of God which establishes the unity of mankind—a unity possible only in the truth", concluded Tolstoy. If the transformation took place within the soul, the transformation in the world would follow.[192] "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you".[193]

17

Gandhiji once observed that if even all the scriptures of the Hindu religion were to perish, one *mantra* of *Ishopanishad* was enough to declare the essence of Hinduism, but even that verse would be of no avail if there were no one to live it.[194] This observation of Gandhiji provides a criterion by which to assess what Tolstoy did in respect of Christ's teachings. In its metaphysical essence the teaching of Christ was not essentially different from the truths that all the great teachers of the world before him—from Buddha, Confucius and Socrates onward had in unmistaken terms enunciated. People admitted that the

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meaning of Christianity was "to love God and our neighbours as ourselves". But that only led to the questions—what is God; what does "to love" mean; what does loving something incomprehensible as God mean; what is a neighbour; how is one to love God, for instance, whom each man understands in his own way and whom some do not recognise at all; can a man love his neighbours as himself while love of self is implanted in him and very often an equally persistent hatred of others, and so on. Without a clear and precise answer to these questions the whole teaching of Christ was reduced to a mere metaphysical proposition, "very important as such, but when understood as a rule of life, law . . . simply stupid". And as Tolstoy sorrowfully remarked, "unfortunately it was taken as such".

To be a living faith a teaching must clearly indicate application to life of the principles it sets forth; how they are or can be related to the true wellbeing of each individual and society, "the possibility of applying them and in expressing the rules by which this is attained.[195] That was what Tolstoy did in regard to the law of love of which the five Commandments are but corollaries and testing points. He indicated the "possibility and happiness" of carrying out the law of love. In the Sermon on the Mount, in which Christ addressed himself not to the wise but to illiterate plebian folk, in the introduction of which he speaks of him "who does not fulfil one of the least of these Commandments" (Matt. 5. 17.32), and in its conclusion says that "it is necessary not to speak but to fulfil (Matt. 7. 21.7); could he in that Sermon, Tolstoy asked, have said anything which would leave even the simplest and the plainest mind in doubt as to his meaning? It was inconceivable. And what could be plainer or simpler to understand or easier to practise by a sincere unsophisticated soul than the teaching summed up in the five Commandments : "Do not be angry, do not lust, do not take oaths, do not go to law, do not fight"? If the truth and feasibility of a proposition was admitted, he said, the difficulty and inconvenience in its practice could not be pleaded as an excuse for consigning it to the limbo. Either Christ's teaching was right or it was wrong. Truth could not be truth under certain circumstances and cease to be such when it did not seem to adapt itself to their convenience. If it led to inconvenience the trouble was not with the truth but with their perverted life. If the justice and truth of Christ's teachings was admitted there could be no cavilling about it.

So convinced was he that in the fulfilment of the five Commandments of Christ, embracing as they do the whole life of each man and of all humanity, lay the true wellbeing of the individual and society; so irresistible seemed to him their appeal to reason that he identified them with the law of the human species that had an objective validity like nature's laws. To Engelhardt, he wrote: "It now seems that had Christ and his teaching not existed I should myself have discovered this truth."

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It was in his complete surrender to the spirit of truth, in his courage unflinchingly to follow the deductions of reason and conscience to their logical conclusion no matter where they might take him, and in his readiness unhesitatingly to retrace his steps once he had discovered that he had missed the way that Tolstoy's real greatness lay. It became the key *mantra* of Gandhiji's life also and the one that was most frequently on his lips.

Carping critics triumphantly asked Tolstoy, "Well, . . . Leo Nikolayevich, you preach—but what about your practice?" To this his reply, disarming in its utter candour and humility, was that he did not, could not preach, though he passionately desired to do so. He could only preach "by deeds", and his deeds were, alas, bad! "What I say is not a sermon, but only the refutation of false understanding of the Christian teaching and an explanation of its real meaning." To the further question that if he considered that apart from the fulfilment of the Christian teaching there was no reasonable life, and if he loved that reasonable life why did he not fulfil the Commandments, his reply was equally frank, sincere and straightforward :

> I am a horrid creature and deserve blame and contempt for not fulfilling them. But yet, not so much in justification as in explanation of my inconsistency, I say: Consider my former life and my present one and you will see that I try to fulfil them. I do not fulfil a ten-thousandth part, it is true, and I am to blame for that; but it is not because I do not wish to fulfil them that I fail, but because I do not know how to. Teach me how to escape from the nets of temptation that have ensnared me, help me, and I will fulfil them; but even without help I desire and hope to do so. Blame me—I do that myself—but blame *me*, and not the path I tread and show to those who ask me where in my opinion the road lies! If I know the road home and go along it drunk, staggering from side to side—does that make the road along which I go a wrong one ? If it be wrong, show me another; if I have lost my way and stagger, help me, support me in the right path as I am ready to support you, but do not baffle me, do not rejoice that I have gone astray, do not delightedly exclaim: 'Look at him! He says he is going home yet he goes into the bog!' . . . See, I am alone, and I cannot wish to fall into the bog. Help me![196]

Describing him as "the greatest apostle of non-violence that the present age had produced", Gandhiji on the occasion of the Tolstoy birthday centenary in 1928 in the course of a public tribute remarked that what had appealed to him most in Tolstoy's life was that he practised what he preached and reckoned no cost too great in his pursuit of truth. "He was the most truthful man of his age. His life was an unbroken tide of striving to seek the truth, and to practise it as he found it. He never tried to hide truth or tone it down but set it before the world in its entirety without equivocation or compromise,

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undeterred by the fear of the world or temporal power."

The second thing was the simplicity of his life. Born and brought up in the luxury and comfort of a rich aristocratic family, having fully known all the joys and pleasures of life he turned his back upon them in the prime of his youth and never afterwards looked back.

The third great point in Tolstoy's teaching, Gandhiji went on to observe, was the doctrine of "bread-labour". Most of the grinding misery in the world, the Russian savant had said, was due to the fact that men failed to discharge their duty in this respect. "He, therefore, regarded all schemes to ameliorate the poverty of the masses by the philanthropy of the rich while they themselves shirked body-labour and continued to live in luxury and ease as hypocrisy and a sham. If only men got off the backs of the poor, he suggested, much of the so-called philanthropy would be rendered unnecessary."

Gandhiji had no patience with those critics of Tolstoy who said that his life was a colossal failure; that he never found his ideal, "the mystical green stick", in whose quest his entire life was passed. All that could possibly be said, remarked Gandhiji, was that he failed fully to realise his own ideal. But that was only human. No one can attain perfection while he is in the body for the simple reason that the ideal state is impossible so long as one has not completely overcome his ego, and ego cannot be wholly got rid of so long as one is tied down by the shackles of the flesh. "It was a favourite saying of Tolstoy that the moment one believes that he has reached his ideal his further progress stops and his retrogression begins and that the very virtue of an ideal consists in that it recedes from us the nearer we go." To say, therefore, that Tolstoy on his own admission failed to reach his ideal did not detract a jot from his greatness; it only showed his humility.

The same about his so-called inconsistencies. They were, Gandhiji observed, more apparent than real. "Constant development is the law of life, and a man who always tries to maintain his dogmas in order to *appear* consistent drives himself into a false position." Tolstoy's so-called inconsistencies were a sign of his development and his passionate regard for truth. He often "seemed inconsistent" because he was continuously outgrowing his own doctrines. "His failures were public, his struggles and triumphs private. The world saw only the former, the latter remained unseen probably by Tolstoy himself most of all." His critics tried to make capital out of his faults, concluded Gandhiji, but no critic could be more exacting than he was with regard to himself. "Ever on the alert for his shortcomings, before his critics had time to point at them he had already proclaimed them to the world magnified a thousandfold and imposed upon himself the penance that seemed to him necessary. He welcomed criticism, even when it was exaggerated, and like all truly great men dreaded world's praise. He was great even in his failures and his failures provided a measure not of the futility of

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his ideals but of his success."

Tolstoy was a daring pioneer-explorer not only of the unmapped realm of man's soul, but of a non-violent, stateless social order also. But he did not systematise his discoveries. His utterances were illuminating flashes of an intuitive genius, mighty fragments of a mighty mind. Gandhiji found in the religious and philosophical formulations of India's ancient seers a more systematic, precise and scientific basis of some of the spiritual and social truths that the sage of Yasnaya Polyana had enunciated. The two started from different premises. Tolstoy was born in the orthodox Christian faith. He had to cut away the dead wood of Christian dogma, embodied in eighteen centuries of established Church tradition, to get at the spirit of Christ's teaching. His battles had to be fought against the Church. Gandhiji, on the other hand, had to deal with the abuses in orthodox Hinduism. His fight was to be against the Sanatani *shastris*, who upheld untouchability as an integral part of the Hindu faith, opposed remarriage of widows and had reduced Hinduism to a system of touch-me-not-ism based on a set of prescriptive do's and dont's. Their angle of approach to and consequently their attitude on some of the spiritual issues, as for instance, the doctrines of rebirth, transmigration, institution of the vows, personal and impersonal aspects of God, personal immorality, and incarnations differed. But since both rested their religious beliefs on the indwelling light that manifests itself through the workings of man's reason and conscience, they often arrived startlingly at the same point by different routes. One declared that his belief in the Commandment about non-resistance as the rule of life for the individual and society was independent of the Bible, the Church, and even Christ, and that if Christ and his teaching had not existed, he felt, he would have himself discovered that truth; the other maintained that his faith in non-violence was independent of the *Gita*, although he claimed to have derived it from the argument presented in that book, and that the validity of his deductions was not affected even by what the author himself might have had in mind when he composed that poem:

> We are not required to probe the mind of the author of the *Gita* as to his limitations of Ahimsa and the like. Because a poet puts a particular truth before the world, it does not necessarily follow that he has known or worked out all its great consequences, or that having done so, he is able always to express them fully.[197]

Typical of the contributions of Tolstoy to Gandhiji's philosophy of life and techniques of non-violent mass action are: (a) The tremenddous significance of infinitesimal variations in the consciousness of men especially when introduced in a nation of four hundred and forty millions. (b) Thought being the progenitor of action, all one has to do to affect a change of heart in the opponent is to show or rather help

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him to see the flaws or gaps in his reasoning without making his mind resistant. After this the man, Gandhiji found, is never the same as before; transformation of conduct follows of itself in due course. (c) The insights that Tolstoy provided into the working of the human mind and the processes involved in social change. Since a person who has abjured the use of force has no other sanction for the organisation and disciplining of the masses for non-violent action and for overcoming the resistance of the opponent, save what knowledge of human nature and the working of man's mind provide, the insights that Gandhiji gained from Tolstoy were of the greatest value to him in his political and social work.

In the stubborn fights that he had to put up against overwhelming odds in South Africa and India again and again he turned to Tolstoy as a perennial source of inspiration. He found in him a guide who like an experienced mountaineer was thoroughly familiar with every crevice, crag, or foothold in the steep heights of non-violence that he was to scale. When he set about to practise the law of love with its corollaries he found readymade answers worked out by Tolstoy, illuminating and satisfying, to most of the conundrums that presented themselves to him. Not only Gandhiji was fond of quoting parables and metaphors with which Tolstoy used to illustrate his answers, but he often used his language also. When somebody objected during the non-co-operation movement in the nineteen-twenties that suspension of their practice by a few leading legal luminaries would not paralyse the machinery of British law courts, Gandhiji almost in Tolstoy's language replied that while it was true that the British law courts could not be put out of action by the sacrifice of a few leading lights of the profession they had by the step they had taken demolished the prestige of those institutions "and to that extent of the British Government". Similarly in his famous controversy with the Poet Rabindranath Tagore on the subject of the spinning wheel and boycott of foreign cloth Gandhiji's remark that he had found it impossible to soothe suffering patients with songs from Kabir is almost a paraphrase of Tolstoy's "Love cannot be stupid. As love for one man will not let us read novels to him who was starving . . . so love for mankind will not let us serve it by amusing the well fed, while we allow the cold and hungry to die of want." Even in the Mahatma's famous statement at his trial in 1922, when he invited Judge Broomfield "to inflict upon me the heaviest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what in law is a deliberate crime and what appears to me as the highest duty of a citizen", one catches an echo of Tolstoy's ultimatum to the Tsar: "I shall continue the cause which the Government regards as a crime and which I regard as my highest duty before God."

Like the master Gandhiji was to have his tussles with his wife, his sons, and other members of his family in the adjustment of the claims

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of family affection with the demands of universal love. Applying the master's technique to the education of his sons he strove to make their future secure not by providing them with education which would enable them to escape the law of body labour, but so bringing them up that they might be able with confidence to face life by their honest industry.

Tolstoy brought home to Gandhiji the social implications, particularly in the economic sphere, of the law of love as perhaps none else. The problem of mass destitution had engaged the attention of many a great man in India from Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa and Swami Vivekananda to Gokhale, Tilak and Ranade. The saint of Dakhshineshwar's remedy did not go beyond alms-giving, and charity; his disciple naively thought that perhaps American philanthropy could help solve the problem. Gokhale, Tilak and the protagonists of the Swadeshi movement believed that replacement of the British capital by Indian within the framework of the modern industrial system would by stopping the drain end India's mass poverty. Nobody before Tolstoy had clearly divined or stated that the cause of the poverty of the poor was the idleness of the rich, and therefore really to help the poor and put an end to "the slavery of our times" the privileged class had first to get off their backs and learn to live by their own industry. This became the cornerstone of Gandhiji's plan of resuscitation of India's non-violent crafts symbolised by hand-spinning, hand-weaving and other dead or dying village industries for the establishment of a non-violent non-exploitative egalitarian social order. "Tolstoy is the founder of Gandhism," observes G. F. Kenan, to which we may add: and also of its repudiation as a cult by the Mahatma.

Tolstoy did not live to see his full doctrine put into practice anywhere or to work out its details. Before it could be used as an effective instrument of mass action it required two more elements to be built into it. They were (1) techniques for achieving non-violent discipline and organisation of the masses and (2) a technique for pursuing perfectionist goals through imperfect tools. Constructive work provided Gandhiji with the means for the first. The core of the other part of Gandhiji's discovery, which made possible the application of Tolstoyan principles of non-resistance on a mass scale, was that he did not need for a non-violent mass struggle believers in the theory of non-violence, full or imperfect. It was enough if the people carried out the rules of non-violent action. Conviction would come through experience under the guidance of the general who would necessarily have to be an adept in Satyagraha.

Gandhiji held with Tolstoy that "an ideal State would be an ordered anarchy", in which everyone would rule himself in such a manner that he would never be a hindrance to his neighbours. But the practical idealist in him recognised that actually this ideal was never fully realised.

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For all practical purposes, some sort of Government there always had been and must be. And since no Government worth its name could suffer anarchy to prevail a "predominantly non-violent Government, a Government that governs least" was the only immediately feasible ideal to be aimed at, a representative democracy backed by a non-violent sanction—not the total abolition of the State.

Unlike Tolstoy Gandhiji did not condemn outright nationalism and patriotism as such. His nationalism, based on the principle of *Swadeshi* which puts upon us a special duty towards our immediate neighbours without conferring any special rights, was a stepping stone to internationalism. The difference between them in regard to this, as in several other such things, one feels, is more in the emphasis and angle of approach than in substance.

Tolstoy's ideal of non-possession was developed by Gandhiji into his Trusteeship doctrine. Complete non-possession, he said, is an abstraction. Even our physical body and our talents, whether inherited or acquired, are a possession. It is not possible to shed completely all possessions. But it is enough if men get rid of possessiveness, which really is the root of evil and which can and does often persist even after physically all possessions have been shed. Similarly inequality of men is the law of nature; not even two leaves on a tree are exactly alike. The only way to sterilise recurring inequalities and residual ownership of their evil is, therefore, to regard all our physical possessions as well as our talent both natural and acquired as not ours in the absolute sense, but a trust from God to be used in His service, in other words, in the service of society.

In presenting his analysis of the processes by which Governments protect their power, Tolstoy had also indicated a blue print of a plan of action by which a non-violent revolution could be affected. *The Kingdom of God is Within You* contains in outline practically the whole of Gandhiji's programme of non-violent non-co-operation. How Gandhiji elaborated the Tolstoyan doctrine of non-resistance and gave body to it in his movement that brought India her independence we shall see. In this he was helped by the teachings of two other savants—John Ruskin and Henry David Thoreau, whose philosophy he synthesised with Tolstoy's. We shall come to this in the next volume.

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CHAPTER XXIII

"HOME, SWEET HOME!"

1

THE CONCERN of his Christian missionary friends in Pretoria followed Gandhiji even to Durban, where they had Spencer Walton of the South Africa General Mission to take care of him spiritually. Not at all a "hot gospeller" like Baker, Walton had a way all his own of stealing people's hearts. Gentle, tolerant and understanding, he never asked Gandhiji to embrace Christianity but placed his life before Gandhiji to study like an open book. Not a whit behind him in goodness of heart was Mrs Walton. But their spiritual charge was no longer a fledgeling. He was fast sprouting wings of his own. No amount of discussion could obliterate the fundamental difference between them. But the sincerity, meekness and charity of the Waltons left a deep mark on him and he felt ever closer to them and they to him — not in respect of their religious tenets — but as fellow seekers.

Gone were the good old days of Pretoria when Gandhiji could engage in a leisurely study of religion. Public activity claimed him more and more as its own. Still he did a considerable amount of reading. Under the guidance of Shrimad Rajchandra (see pp. 327-331) he began to make a comparative study of different religions. Kavi Narmadashanker's *Dharma Vichar*, in which that poet has described how his religious studies had transformed his Bohemian way of life, impressed him greatly. He read the *Upanishads* in The Theosophical Society's English translation, Max Muller's *India—What Can It Teach Us*, Washington Irving's *Life of Mahomet and His Successors*, and *The Sayings of Zarathustra*.

Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* stimulated in him, as in the Russian Sage, the desire to test out and cultivate the yogic techniques for attainment of mental control and *chitta shuddhi*, "purification of the senses" outlined in that treatise with such scientific precision, skill and profound psychological insight. He began experimenting with some yogic practices, but was hampered owing to lack of an experienced guide. Nor could he resume his effort, as he had hoped to, on his return to India. The attainment of the yogic discipline consequently remained with him an aspiration only. But he never ceased to emphasise its efficacy as a means for the awakening of the higher faculties in man's being and the cultivation of the high attention which is needed for the release of the infinite energy imprisoned in the soul.

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His pursuit of religion brought Gandhiji in touch with another Christian family besides the Waltons. On their invitation he began to attend the Wesleyan Church on Sundays. But the sermons were dull and lifeless and occasionally he found himself dozing off involuntarily during service. When he found that many others in the congregation also fared no better, he stopped attending the Church.

Not long afterwards his contact with this Christian family also came to an abrupt end, under rather strange circumstances. They had been good enough to extend to him a standing invitation to dinner on Sundays and he had readily availed himself of it. His hostess had a darling of a child and he had the knack of making himself the darling of children. The gospel of Vegetarianism kept cropping up like King Charles' head in their religious discussions. One day in perfect innocence Gandhiji praised the compassion of the Buddha, whom Edwin Arnold in his *The Light of Asia* has depicted as carrying on his shoulders a maimed lamb out of pity for the suffering animal. Jesus, in all innocence he ventured to remark, seemed to be lacking in the quality of all-embracing pity which excluded not even sub-human creation. His hostess felt hurt. Unwittingly he had dropped a brick. He tactfully changed the topic, and tried to soothe her ruffled feeling as well as he could. But it was too late; the mischief was done. At the dinner table his ecstatic praise of the apple to the disparagement of the meat dish gained him a convert to vegetarianism in her hostess's child. The good lady felt it was time to cry halt to this proselytisation in the reverse. Politely she asked her guest to confine his vegetarian propaganda to the elder members of the family and leave her poor child alone. The boy had already begun to object to eating meat, she complained, and was quoting in support of his objection their Indian visitor's arguments and she did not want her son's health to be ruined.

Taking in the situation instantly, Gandhiji decided to put her completely at her ease. What he ate or omitted was likely to influence the child as much if not even more than what he said. In the circumstances, he suggested to her, it would perhaps be better if he discontinued visiting their house altogether. That of course, he hastened soothingly to add, would not affect their friendship.

The good lady's countenance lit up. "Thank you," she exclaimed with evident relief, as she nodded agreement.

2

Spiritually Gandhiji had found firm moorings. Religious uncertainty troubled him no longer. Tolstoy had resolved his difficulties in regard to Christian dogma as presented to him by his missionary friends. It was a great joy to him to discover that one could practise Christianity in its true sense without renouncing one's own faith, and

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that both Christianity and the Hindu religion had an identical goal and laid down rules of conduct for their respective votaries that were identical, though expressed in different idioms. He began to study Christianity and Christian missionary activity from a new angle: viz., in relation to their distinctive contribution to the "native policy" and to the life of the "natives".

The influence of Tolstoy's teaching on religion and his onslaught on the citadel of orthodox Christianity had begun to make itself felt even in the Dark Continent, causing a faint stirring in the breast of the educated African Christian, who began to judge Christianity by a new standard. The Christian missionary on his part was led to reassess his own activity and methods of work in the light of the new teaching.

A series of outspoken articles that appeared in the native journal *Inkanyiso* in this connection under the title "Christianity vs. Natives", had a deep impact on Gandhiji. The writer, who preferred not to disclose his name, was evidently himself a missionary. Commenting on what had become a commonplace in missionary circles, that the Christian Kaffir was a "failure", he maintained that what had failed was not Christianity but "the vile stuff" that was "palmed off" by the priests as such. "The Kaffir who has turned a failure had never been a Christian." The failure was not his but the priest's.

The Master had sent forth his disciples with the injuction to provide neither gold nor silver, nor brass in their purses, nor scrip for their journey, neither two coats, nor yet staves; "for the workman is worthy of his meat. . . . Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye, therefore, wise as serpents and harmless as doves. . . . And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body".[1]

But the modern missionary had no use for this gospel of inconvenience. Marching orders with which the other master seemed to have sent him forth were:

> Provide yourself with trunks and gladstone bags. . . . Well fill the trunks with . . . clothing suitable for civilised men. Take also tennis bats and balls, for ye shall not render your life dull by harping at the same old story all the days of your life, but shall combine pleasure with preaching. Take also some gold and some small change that it may be of use to you in your journey. Take some half-a-dozen Day & Martin's blacking boxes and brushes. . . . You may take with you Paley's *Evidences of Christianity* . . . a few copies of the Bible with gilt borders and . . . some light literature to beguile your weary hours. . . . Forget not to provide yourselves with some bottles of brandy and whisky, which will cheer you and your wife up . . . when you feel the monotony of your lives in the deserts of South Africa.[2]

With unrelenting mock seriousness the writer continued his cata-

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logue of the requirements of the missionary of "Christianity with convenience".

Of course you will take with you a medicine chest containing some mild tonics and laxatives, which may be useful when you suffer from indigestion or other disorders of the stomach owing to overeating. For you shall feed yourselves well; it is not that which enters the body that defileth but that which cometh out of your hearts. You may therefore take with you potted meats and other delicacies which civilisation has provided for you. It is not meet that you should be without such things also. It is enough that you consent to go to South Africa. It is a sacrifice worthy of yourselves that getting nothing at home you relieve the overcrowding of the market in these days of depression on such a small salary.[3]

As for going forth as "sheep in the midst of wolves", it was only a poetic exhortation, not to be taken literally. The modern version of the old injuction was:

Arm yourselves with a five-chamber revolver and a breach loader. You know not what the wily Natives of South Africa may do to you. If they are inclined to eat you make the proper use of your revolver. The breach loader will enable you to get some nice game and you will be enabled to indulge in sporting now forbidden.[4]

The Master had charged his disciples "to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers . . . cast out the devils". All this was antiquated nonsense. They had now hospitals and leprasoria to take care of the sick and the lepers. The "devils" had all been cast out by science along with the superstitious ignorance that begot them. A higher and nobler mission awaited the modern evangelist—spread of "civilisation" among the benighted heathens, which would create unlimited markets for the manufactures of the home country, and keep the factories working round the clock. A knowledge of the topography and of the tongue and habits of the native would be invaluable in pushing the frontiers of the Empire farther and farther into the heart of the Dark Continent, and patriotism was a Christian virtue. The marching orders of the modern evangelist were:

Teach the natives to be obedient, inspire them with awe and fear for the white man. Teach them the alphabet well. Give them a working knowledge of the English language. Read to them the Bible. . . . Teach them to use the fork and the knife, to dress in the modern style. Teach them the devices of the modern civilisation. Prepare the way for the Canteen-keepers and the Speculators. We want, you know, larger fields day by day to cope with the growing wants of civilisation. Our young men must go out and possess themselves of land. You must not forget patriotism. It is well that civilisation should spread even though it be at the sacrifice of the heathenish

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Natives. Learn their character well. Study the physical aspects of the country and give the people at home the benefit of your knowledge and, lo! the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand for you. This do my brother and to your plenty shall be added more and yet more till you are choked.[5]

This was the reason, the writer trenchantly pointed out, why the Christian missionary effort had failed—what was offered to the "native" was as opposed to true Christianity as "the North pole is to the South". The missionary smoked, he drank, he overate, he delighted in delicacies and took to evangelism and went to South Africa and to other countries simply because there were "no berths vacant at home and the market was so glutted. Did he not, in fact, "cruelly often open the way for the pioneer speculator and the canteen-keeper?" Had not through his instrumentality time and again the Natives been deprived of their lands and had not Max Orell's saying that "John Bull (or rather the European) converts the Kaffir to Christianity and his land to his own use"[6] been vindicated? the journal asked. Little wonder then that an African potentate in an outburst of righteous indignation once had said to a missionary who was descanting upon the advantages of Christianity:

> Christian lie! Christian cheat! Christian steal, drink, murder! Christian has robbed me of my lands and slain my tribe. The Devil Christian! I will be no Christian.[7]

Comparing the mission work done by the Muslims and the Christians, *Inkanyiso* recalled how a learned Bishop in a letter to the London *Times* had once expressed the opinion that Islam had outrun Christianity in the race. Emphatically repudiating the current belief that the Islamites had succeeded because they had used force in proselytising, he had maintained that the real reason was that while the Church missionaries led a life of luxury and separation from the Natives the Islamites lived simply and treated them on a footing of equality as brothers, and not as slaves or beings only half human.

> Anyone who has seen the East Coast natives can himself ascertain the truth of the statement. The same mosque is used for the Arabs and the Natives. They dine together; in fact free intercourse prevails amongst them. As a result the Mahomedan Native is of an altogether different type from the unconverted. He is well dressed. He is polite. He is cleanly and respectable in appearance. He is intelligent. He is industrious and I believe an honest citizen.[8]

He ventured to say, the writer in *Inkanyiso* concluded, that "such riotous (riotous for a clergyman) living" was "without precedent in the history of the world". Teachers and proselytes alike had the world over embraced poverty. Neither Jesus, nor John the Baptist, not even

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St. Paul carried any money on any of their journeys. In Catholic monastries poverty was enforced, the Muslim Fakirs were of necessity voluntarily poor, the Buddha renounced his kingly birthright, family and all, the yellow-robed Buddhist monks walked in his steps, the Jaina monks eschewed metal pots but had only a wooden bowl.

Count Tolstoy lives the life of a beggar although he has a princely fortune—And such are the men who have done the most substantial good to the world. Where is the precedent for a band of missionaries, except in the modern times, bent upon spreading peace to many homes, to own wealth and riches to smoke away even the least part of their time, all too little for the work undertaken for love of work, for love of mankind, to sport and to do all the things described above?[9]

The missionary had to enact his own conversion before preaching it to the Natives. He could not, without being false to his colours, continue to sit on the fence, and remain a silent, unprotesting witness to the inequity and unrighteousness of colour prejudice, to the outcry to "put down the Natives", or to legislation preventive of their immigration. He could not permit the Native to remain a "hewer of wood and drawer of water" for ever. It would not do to trot out the lame excuse that these were political matters with which he, as missionary, was not concerned. The missionary had in fact in the past dabbled in politics—only not in the interest of his charges but that of his paymaster, the Government of the country from which he drew his support. He could not, like Pontius Pilate, disclaim responsibility by ablution for the "blood" of the Natives. If the missionary did his duty properly, there would be no "Native problem", and the Colony would really become "a model Colony as other British Colonies".

The *Times of Natal* found in these observations a programme to set the blacks against the whites. "If such a programme be entered upon," it observed, "Natal will become a black Colony, politically and socially within a couple of decades".[10]

A fitting rebuttal of The *Times of Natal's* fulmination was provided by the Bishop of Natal. In delivering his charge at the opening of the Diocesan Synod in S. Saviour's Cathedral he came out with a courageous statement, which practically endorsed *Inkanyiso's* indictment. Taking as his text the lament in the parable of the fishermen in Luke 5, 5 "Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing",[11] and the Master's exhortation, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets",[12] he remarked that the reason of the missionaries' feeling of frustration was their timid approach to their calling, "their hugging the bank, keeping to safe ground at the sacrifice of larger success", their endeavour "to secure at the same time the profits of the sea and the safety of the shore".[13]

To seek both was to gain neither. Choice was inevitable. They

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could not work for God "without encountering the hostility of the world", or "square the principles of the Kingdom of God with human conventions". This was what they had been guilty of when they were content to shut out all thoughts of "more than half the people in their parishes", when they had put not only outside the range of their operations but even of their interest "all but the little group of white people".

Their love of Christ, the Right Reverend Bishop went on to say, ought to enable them to discover potentialities of "saintliness", and reveal lovable qualities "even in Kaffirs, or Hindoos". When this new attitude of mind "which the transforming love of Christ must bring with it" had taken possession of them, it would inevitably lead to new principles of action towards the native. "It cannot be otherwise. . . . *A genuine Christian cannot have the same native policy as an ordinary man of the world.*" The Christian conscience demanded that "no human being may ever be used as a mere machine. Any man who is capable of moral life may never be a mere means to *our* ends. He is an end in himself. That is to say, we cannot afford without damage to our own moral ideal to leave out the consideration of his moral life as a thing of worth to us—an end to be pursued not only by him but by ourselves."[14]

To put it differently, the good which a man conceived as his own highest aim presented itself to him as one which could only be attained in concert with all whom he conceived as being alike capable of it. "The highest good is a moral life which cannot be accomplished by the individual in isolation, but which consists of the relations, duties, courtesies, and charities towards *all* who are themselves moral beings. Whatever, therefore, goes to the making of the fulness of my own life I possess in trust to share with all others who are capable of it."[15]

People with unchristian consciences, men who were not unkindly and unenlightened but who yet represented the average morality of the world, might adopt the principle that "in a country where white and black meet, and where the climate allows the white man to rear a family, the black man has to give way; the white man will not let him enter into competition." This was the accepted principles. But there was another force, the Bishop concluded, the force of Christian conscience. It was for them to see that this force worked potently till the whole mass was leavened.

In terms of their attitude towards the natives this meant:

whether we be clergy or laymen, whether we minister to white or black, *as servants of the Lord Jesus Christ we are responsible for the growth of Christian public opinion on the question, which must be the paramount social question here, the question of our duties to the natives. The neglect of it, the otiose acquiescence in the opinions on it of the world, are disastrous to the sensitiveness or our conscience, the growth of our own spiritual life and the depth and reality of our work among our white congregation.*[16]

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A well-marked clipping of this address preserved among Gandhiji's records bespeaks the deep interest it evoked in him. The decade and a half following his arrival in South Africa was perhaps the most formative period of his life. Impressions absorbed during this period sank deep into his consciousness till, their very source and origin forgotten, they became part and parcel of his being. Illustrative of it were the views he gathered about the secret of the success of the Muslim missionary; the incongruity of profession of Christianity with carrying of fire-arms for self-protection by the Christian missionary, or his seeking the protection of the temporal power in pursuit of his avocation; and finally the dictum that the success or otherwise of the Christian missionary effort could not be measured apart from the impact it had on the life of the natives and the "native policy" of the country in which he served. Many years afterwards, on his return to India, Dr. John Mott, the American Missionary, once asked him what he considered to be the distinctive contribution of Christianity to the upbuilding of India. "I mean the influence of Christ as apart from Christianity," he added, "for I am afraid, there is a wide gulf separating the two."

"Aye, there lies the rub," replied Gandhiji. "It is not possible to consider the teaching of a religious teacher apart from the lives of his followers. Unfortunately, Christianity . . . appears to us as synonymous with materialistic civilisation and imperialistic exploitation by the stronger white races of the weaker races of the world."[17]

The Bishop of Natal in the course of his address had also remarked that the out and out Christian was and was likely to remain in a minority always. "Nevertheless the Christian view will have its due effect in the long run on the policy of the race." Such sincere Christian missionaries as dared—though in a microscopic minority—fearlessly to champion the rights of the oppressed and subject people even at the cost of incurring the displeasure of the temporal power, Gandhiji hugged close to his soul, his differences with them in the matter of belief and their methods of proselytisation notwithstanding.

3

On the point of crossing the sea to South Africa Gandhiji had promised Kasturba that if he could not come back to her at the end of the Dada Abdulla engagement and if his stay there had to be extended for more than six months he would fetch her or if professional needs prevented this he would send for her. That assurance was due for fulfilment now that the prospect of a prolonged uphill struggle had opened up before him. Well established at the bar, which would enable him to maintain by independent practice his family in South Africa in some comfort without letting down his people there, who were loath to let go of him, he asked for six months' leave of absence

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which was gladly given. His Indian visit would, it was felt, enable him to stir up Indians, till then utterly unconscious of the jeopardy in which their countrymen overseas had been thrown. Appointing him as Agent, the Natal Indian Congress voted £75 to defray the expenses of travelling and other out of pocket expenses that he might incur while in India in connection with his work.

Adamji Miyakhan was to be his substitute in Natal in charge of the Natal Indian Congress and the Education Society. A happy choice it proved to be. Besides being a shrewd man of business, Adamji was equipped with a working knowledge of English, which he had casually picked up in dealing with Europeans. Through his contacts with the Zulus he had mastered their language and gained an insight into their mentality, customs and manners. To these he joined the qualities of firmness, patience and perseverance, a knowledge of human nature, plenty of practical common sense and a sound judgment. These qualities, Gandhiji again and again found, counted in public life, and particularly in the rough-and-tumble of a political struggle, much more than legal training, proficiency in English, or intellectual attainments.

On the eve of his departure the Tamil and Gujarati Indians of Durban gave him a send-off at the Indian Congress Hall under the auspices of the Natal Indian Congress. Dada Abdulla presided. Vincent Lawrence acted as interpreter. A gold medal and a farewell address eulogising his service were presented to him in Gujarati, Hindi and Urdu but none, it seems, in English. In his reply Gandhiji commended the eagerness of the diverse elements of the Indian community to be cemented into a closer union which their having come together on a common platform betokened. Regretting his inability to speak in Tamil, he urged attendance in a greater measure than hitherto of the Tamil Indians at their meetings. The objects of the Congress could not be attained merely by talk. They must prove their devotion by deeds rather than words. They should raise, before his return, the Congress fund, which then stood at £194, by at least £1,000.[18] The Tamil members of the Congress presented a further address at a special meeting.

The Natal press viewed these functions in a friendly spirit. In an interview given to the representative of the *Natal Advertiser*, who called upon him on the eve of his departure, Gandhiji reiterated that the immediate objective of the Congress was to ensure that the promises made in the Proclamation of 1858 were fulfilled. "When the Indians enjoy the same status in the Colony as they do in India, the Congress would have achieved its end politically." If legal status equal with the Europeans were conceded, Indians would not object to any safeguard that in reason might be deemed essential to ensure the European political predominance in the Colony.

The s.s. *Pongola*, with Gandhiji aboard, weighed anchor on the morning of June 5, 1896. It headed for Calcutta, whither mostly went

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steamers from Natal those days. Some English officers were among the few passengers on board. With one of them he played chess an hour a day and from another he learned Urdu. At the latter's request he obtained a copy of *Munshi*, a Hindustani Self-Instructor. This I found him carrying in railway journeys in 1920 (see p. 11). He made headway with the speech but the script baffled him; his English friend did better. He also started learning Tamil with the help of the *Tamil Self-Teacher* and was able to achieve a tolerable measure of success. On his return to India he tried to learn Telugu but never got beyond the alphabet. These studies were meant to bring him into closer touch with the Muslim and the South Indian sections of the Indian community upon his return to Natal. Though he never succeeded in mastering South Indian languages he felt that the striving brought him very close spiritually to the Tamil and Telugu speaking people and in later years he again and again referred nostalgically to such labours.

The affection that the Dravidians in South Africa showered on me has remained a cherished memory. Whenever I see a Tamil or a Telugu friend, I cannot but recall the faith, perseverance and selfless sacrifice of many of his compatriots in South Africa. And they were mostly illiterate, the men no less than the women. The fight in South Africa was for such, . . . it was fought by illiterate soldiers; it was for the poor, and the poor took their full share in it. Ignorance of their language . . . was never a handicap to me in stealing the hearts of these simple and good countrymen. . . . But I wanted to requite their affection by learning Tamil and Telugu. . . . I fear now I can never learn these languages, and am therefore hoping that the Dravidians will learn Hindustani.[19]

The Captain of the ship was a Plymouth Brother. He became friends with Gandhiji. Gandhiji's vegetarianism led to many a discussion on religion but

the religion that imposed any moral restrictions was to him no good. . . . Why should I not eat meat. . . ? Had not God created all the lower animals for the enjoyment of mankind. . . .? . . . I was confirmed in my opinion that religion and morality were synonymous. The Captain had no doubt about the correctness of his opposite conviction.[20]

They agreed to differ. In twenty-four days the ship reached Calcutta. The same day, July 4, 1896, Gandhiji entrained for Bombay.

As a result of using soap with sea-water during the voyage, he had contracted a troublesome itch. When the train reached Allahabad, he got down to obtain from a druggist an ointment that would give relief. The druggist was half-asleep behind his counter. When Gandhiji reached the railway station after the required drug was found the train had already left.

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He turned his misadventure to good account by starting his Indian work for South African Indians from the room he rented at Kellner's. The Editor of the *Pioneer*, the influential Anglo-Indian daily of Allahabad, Mr (later Sir) George Maclagan Chesney (Jr.), who saw him, was all sympathy. He promised to notice in his paper whatever Gandhiji might send him on the question but added that he was bound to give due weight to the viewpoint of the Colonial whites also. Gandhiji told him that all he expected of him was to make a careful unbiased study of the issue and then act according to his lights. He wanted nothing more. This unexpected interview, he records in his *Autobiography*, "laid the foundation of the series of incidents"[21] which ultimately led to his being almost lynched in Natal. The rest of the day was spent in having a look round the town and especially at the magnificent confluence of the Ganga and the Jamuna at Triveni.

Resuming his journey by the next train he reached Rajkot on July 9, 1896, without getting down at Bombay, and began forthwith preparing an elaborate statement on the "grievances of Indians in South Africa". This later became famous as the "Green Pamphlet" from the colour of its cover. The four thousand copies printed were widely distributed.

His capacity to economise on expenses by improvisation and effective utilisation of infinitesimals of neglected resources, that are everywhere at hand, came into play. Collecting all the children in the neighbourhood he detailed them to address wrappers for two to three hours of a morning when they had no school. His blessings and "used postage stamps" which he had collected were the reward they were to receive from him. They thoroughly entered into the spirit and the job was finished in record time.

This was only the beginning. Boy and girl volunteers became increasingly a vital part of his fighting force in his later non-violent struggles and improvisation the hall-mark of his genius that revolutionised the public life of India in the nineteen-twenties.

Almost every paper of any note noticed the "Green Pamphlet". In a leading article the *Times of India* advocated a public enquiry. The *Pioneer*, while admitting the grievances, thought that the question was "an extremely complicated one in the case of a self-governing colony". It advised the better class Indians to avoid South Africa in the circumstances. The Simla correspondent of the London *Times* cabled a summary of the pamphlet with a gist of the views expressed by the *Times of India* and the *Pioneer*.

The plague had broken out in Bombay in the meantime and it was feared that it might spread to Rajkot. Gandhiji offered his services to the State which were accepted. He was put on the Committee that was formed to take preventive measures. Among these he gave the first place to cleanliness. The Committee inspected the latrines in every street.

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Sanitary arrangements in private houses in Rajkot those days were nightmarish. What he saw there was enough to horrify him. The stink in a two-storeyed bedroom in one house that the Committee visited was so overpowering that "it was a surprise that any one could sleep in that room at all". The poor had no objection to their latrines being inspected but the rich resented it. The latrines of the well-to-do were the filthiest. They were also the most resistant to suggestions for their improvement. As a result many of the recommendations of the Committee in that behalf remained a dead letter.

The Committee also visited a *Vaishnava Haveli* (temple). They found the refuse and the leaves used as dinner plates dumped by the devotees in an odd corner, which seemed never to have been cleaned since the temple was built. Clouds of kites and crows hung over the place —not to mention the flies and the stink. It was enough to make one feel sick. Cleanliness is enjoined as a ritual in the Hindu faith. Such a flagrant disregard of this injunction pained Gandhiji deeply, and fired him with the resolve for a thorough physical and moral clean-up of the sacred places of the Hindus all over India.

The quarters of the "untouchables", as they were called, presented a particularly challenging problem. The Committee members considered inspection of the latrines of the latrine-cleaners as "sheer nonsense". Only one member could be persuaded to accompany Gandhiji.

This was Gandhiji's first visit to such a locality. He felt amply rewarded. How the scavengers welcomed a former Chief Minister's son! The men and women babbled and bubbled their delight *sotto voce*. But when he asked to be shown their latrines they exclaimed: "Latrines are only for big people like you! We go and perform our functions out in the open." What about their homes? Could he inspect them? "By all means," they replied and took him into what to them were homes. No more than holes, they were to his agreeable surprise, spick and span. The entrances were well-swept, the mud floors smoothly plastered with cow-dung and clay, the pots and pans shone even in the half light. "No fear of an outbreak in those quarters," he told his Committee colleagues.

In later years whenever Gandhiji visited a residential institution the first thing he did was to inspect the latrines and next the kitchen. This, he averred, enabled him better to assess the work of any and every institution than all the published reports or even an on-the-spot personal inspection of its various activities.

On August 17, three days after the publication of the "Green Pamphlet", Gandhiji went to Bombay. There he presented the South African question in perspective to Badruddin Tyabji, the first Indian Muslim to preside over the Indian National Congress before his elevation to the High Court Bench, and to the socio-economic worker,

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Mahadeva Govinda Ranade, now a colleague on the bench. They both sent him to Pherozeshah Mehta. The Lion of Bombay was surrounded in his chambers, where the interview took place, with friends and admirers. Among them were his right hand man, D. E. Wacha, the economist and statistician, and Mr Cama. Taking to Gandhiji immediately Wacha said, "Mr Gandhi we must meet again."

Evincing a fatherly concern in the situation, the Uncrowned King of Bombay called his secretary, Munshi, and asked him to fix a date for holding a public meeting. This done, he bade good-bye, asking Gandhiji to call upon him the day before the meeting. At last there was success where only a while before there was nothing but frustration.

His sister's husband was desperately ill in Bombay. She had neither the stamina for the 24-hour a day nursing nor the means even to engage an attendant. He took in the situation as he rushed into the humble home. His job done, he packed both in the train by which he was returning to Rajkot. Nursed by him day and night in his own bedroom the brother-in-law ultimately died. Such supreme satisfaction from this service did Gandhiji derive that nursing became his passion. It even led him, as he said, "to neglect my work". Setting forth the ideal of tending the sick and the ailing to the inmates of the Phoenix in South Africa in a post-prayer address he once remarked that "while nursing, our prayer should be that God might enable us to relieve the patient's suffering by taking it over upon ourselves".[22] He regarded such selfless loving service as a means beyond compare for cleansing the spirit. In the days of his Mahatmaship when people came to him with their spiritual ailments and deep inner wounds, he would out of his boundless compassion prescribe to them this as the sovereign cure:

> Service which is rendered without joy helps neither the servant nor the served. But all other pleasures and possessions pale into nothingness before service which is rendered in a spirit of joy.[23]

Gandhiji still had faith that British rule was "on the whole beneficial to the world". Colour prejudice of which even he himself had experience in South Africa, he regarded as a temporary aberration, local in its character and repugnant to the spirit of the British constitution and British tradition. He, therefore, "vied with Englishmen in . . . loyalty to the throne", taught his children to sing with him the National Anthem in the correct English style and never missed an opportunity to give public expression to his loyalty to the throne. This he did without fuss or ostentation.

Later his spirit rebelled against some aspects of the National Anthem as un-Christian, and his fierce loyalty proved more subversive to British Imperialism than the undisciplined ardour of the Indian revolutionaries. Of this more by and by.

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When he reached India preparations for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee were in progress. He needed no persuasion to agree to serve on a Committee that had been formed for the purpose in Rajkot. Repelled by the sycophancy and sham in evidence, he for a while doubted if he should continue on the Committee, but ultimately decided to "be content with doing my part of the business".

Tree-planting was one of the activities recommended by that body for launching on this occasion. Much of the Peninsula had been denuded by avarice for timber and for plots for cultivation, the process being accentuated by the deepening destitution of the masses, who were hard put to it to find enough fuel even to boil their pot of rice. When the rains were unusally heavy, floods swept over the land, for the most part without a hummock, and damaged crops, destroyed houses, killed cattle. His fellow-members must have known all this and also that the root system of the trees sopped up water and slackened the pace of the run off. But when he pleaded with them to make a job of it or else leave it alone, he derived the impression that they laughed in their sleeves. This did not damp his spirit. He not only planted the trees allotted to him but also carefully tended them. Watering entailed no small labour.

Half a century later when he had reached nearly the end of his journey there was again a tree-planting drive in India—*Van Mahotsav*. To his sorrow there was the same lukewarmness under the shimmer of show. The first lady in the land—Lady Mountbatten, was a notable exception. It gladdened his heart to find in her in this regard a kindred spirit and he paid her a glowing tribute.[24]

4

The public meeting that had been fixed for September 26 in Bombay rescued him from his petty world. Worn and exhausted by the strain of nursing, he set out on the very day on which his brother-in-law died. When Pherozeshah asked him on the day before the meeting, if he had his speech ready, he replied he had not written it out, he would speak extempore.

"This won't do," the orator told him. "In Bombay reporting is bad. You must write out your speech and it must be printed before day-break tomorrow." It was already 5 p.m. His man, Sir Pherozeshah said, would come to collect the manuscript at 11. "I hope you will be able to manage it."

Hiding his nervousness, Gandhiji said he would try. The man came precisely at the appointed hour and collected the manuscript which was printed overnight.

The meeting was held in the hall of Sir Cowasji Jehangir Institute with Pherozeshah in the chair. Gandhiji rose with alacrity when

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called upon, but had no voice. Many a night's vigil while nursing his brother-in-law had told upon him. To his consternation he found that his words could reach very few. This being his first public appearance in India, he felt shaken. "Louder," encouragingly shouted the chairman, "still louder." That only made matters worse.

Keshavrao Deshpande came to his rescue. Gandhiji handed him his speech to read. But the audience clamoured to hear Wacha's voice. At a nod from Pherozeshah, Wacha stood up and began to read the speech. With his trained voice, platform practice and the gift of sympathy he held the meeting spellbound. As from his lips leapt Gandhiji's clipped, clear phrases they entered straight into the hearts of the distinguished gathering. His recital of the indignities heaped on their brethren in Natal and their heroic struggle against heavy odds, evoked thunderous applause and frequent shouts of "shame". Pherozeshah liked the speech greatly. Gandhiji was elated.

A resolution of sympathy, with Pherozeshah's masterly touch, was moved. Sponsored by him and supported among others by the Honourable Jhaverilal Yajnik and Rahimutulla Mahammed Sayani, both founder-members of the Indian National Congress, and Mr Chambers, the editor of the *Champion*, it was carried unanimously. It empowered the President to draw up a memorial and forward it to Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for India.

The next day Gandhiji had the satisfaction of seeing the proceedings fully reported in the Press. Presidency Association cabled to London a summary, which Pherozeshah had passed.

From Bombay Gandhiji went to Poona, and had his first sight of the faction-ridden politics of India of the day. Bombay Presidency was riven by the chronic quarrel between the Sarvajanik Sabha under Ranade and the Deccan Sabha under the Lokamanya Tilak (see p.141). Noticing his innocence, Tilak enlightened him. There was no chance of the factions coming together on the same platform under the presidentship of a rival party man even though both viewed from one angle the South African Indian question. He was advised to see Professor G. K. Gokhale and to persuade a person like Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar, who was regarded as a non-party man, to preside over his meeting. Gokhale endorsed the Lokamanya's idea. Dr. Bhandarkar being approached readily consented, though he rarely took part in public life. "Your case is so strong and your industry . . . so admirable," he said to Gandhiji, "that I cannot refuse you."

This was Gandhiji's first meeting with India's great leaders.. From Sir Pherozeshah—"the Himalayas, unscaleable"—he had come upon Tilak—"The Ocean", boundless, majestic, and fathomless. But in Gokhale he found "the mother Ganges" against whose bosom he could pillow his head.

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I met him at his quarters on the college ground. It was like meeting an old friend, or better still a mother after a long separation. His gentle face put me at ease in a moment. His minute inquiries about myself and my doings in South Africa at once enshrined him in my heart. And as I parted from him, I said to myself, 'you are my man'. And from that moment Gokhale never lost sight of me.[25]

Gokhale took personal interest in Gandhiji, wished to have a look at his speech, advised him whom to approach and how, and finally asked him to report to him the result of his meeting with Dr. Bhandarkar. Gandhiji came away from the meeting feeling "exultantly happy". The personal relationship formed thus led him later to adopt Gokhale as his "political guru".

After settling the date of the meeting at Poona, Gandhiji proceeded to Madras. Here he was readily taken up by the foremost Indian jurist, Justice Subramanya Aiyer. Eardly Norton and Bhashyam Ayangar, the famous legal luminaries, who were to figure prominently in India's political struggle in the nineteen-twenties, listened to him with patient sympathy and became his firm, loyal friends. He was hailed by G. Subramanyam, the editor of South India's premier Indian daily, the *Hindu*, and Parmeshwaram Pillay, the editor of the *Madras Standard*. The Honourable Ananda Charlu, one of the founder-patriarchs of the Congress, noted for his rugged eloquence, welcomed him. To call a public meeting under the auspices of the Madras Mahajan Sabha a circular was drawn up over the signature of some 40 representatives of various sections of the community, beginning with Raja Sir Ramaswamy Mudaliar. The meeting was held on October 26 in the Pachaiyappa Hall. The Honourable Ananda Charlu presided. The address was fairly long. But it was listened to with rapt attention. After the address, resolutions framed on lines similar to those at the Bombay meeting were moved, seconded and supported by leading public men like Mr Adams, Mr Parmeshwaram Pillay, and Mr Parthasarathy Naidu, and passed with acclamation. A special resolution was also passed suggesting the stopping of indentured labour to Natal. All the leading dailies fully reported the proceedings.

Parmeshwaram Pillay went one better. He put the columns of his paper entirely at Gandhiji's disposal. Gandhiji was not slow to avail himself of its hospitality whenever occasion arose.

The scramble for the "Green Pamphlet" at the end of the meeting was a sight to remember. All the available copies were sold "like hot cakes". To meet the clamour an additional 2,000 copies were printed locally.

Madras was the land of Balasundaram. The tidings of what Gandhiji had done in Natal for indentured labour from South India had already reached there. The people of Madras requited his labour

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of love with a warmth of affection that indelibly imprinted itself on his heart. The bonds thus forged neither time nor distance could weaken. Throughout the non-violent struggle for Indian independence, Madras put itself in the vanguard of the fight.

The cable from the Simla correspondent of the London *Times*, following the publication of the first edition of the "Green Pamphlet", infuriated Sir Walter Peace, the Agent General for Natal in London. He had himself interviewed. Nowhere else were the Indians better treated than in Natal, he barefacedly asserted. That the majority of the indentured labourers did not avail themselves of the return passage was, he added, irrefutable answer to Gandhiji's pamphlet. The railway and tramcar officials did not treat the Indians "as beasts", he went on, nor did the law courts deny them justice.

Gandhiji did not let these wild assertions go unchallenged. He incorporated in a second and enlarged edition of the "Green Pamphlet" a smashing rejoinder, backing it with copious extracts from the South African press and Government reports. In his enthusiasm he had ten thousand copies of it printed. But this proved to be an overestimate. The fact that the Indians did not, as a rule, avail themselves of the return passage did not, he observed in his rejoinder, disprove the existence of legal and extra-legal disabilities. "It may prove that the Indians . . . either do not mind the disabilities or remain in the Colony in spite of the disabilities." If it was the former, it was the duty of those who knew better to make them resent degradation. If, on the other hand, the latter was the case it was "one more instance of the patience and the forbearing spirit" of the Indian nation. "Because they bear them is no reason why the disabilities should not be removed or why they should be interpreted into meaning the best treatment possible".[26] Besides, it was common knowledge that the Indians who went to the Colony as immigrant labourers were drawn from the poorest classes:

> A starving man, generally, would stand any amount of rough treatment to get a crumb of bread. Do not the Uitlanders make out a terribly long list of grievances in the Transvaal? And yet, do they not flock to the Transvaal in thousands, in spite of the ill-treatment they receive there, because they can earn their bread in the Transvaal more easily than in the old country?[27]

As for the ill-treatment of Indians on railways and tramcars it was nearly two years since he had made that statement in his "Open Letter" which he had addressed to the members of the Natal Parliament. That pamphlet was widely circulated in the Colony and had been noticed by almost every leading newspaper in South Africa. "No one contradicted it then. It was even admitted by some newspapers." He was, therefore, perfectly justified, he said, in reproducing it in the "Green Pamphlet". Most devastating were the quotations from reports that

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had appeared in the South African press of cases of ill-treatment of coloured folk, while travelling on the South African railways; from the judgments of law courts, where judges had passed strictures on the railway authorities, and from the railway regulation themselves sanctioning discrimination against coloured passengers.

In a letter to the *Times of India*, Gandhiji denied that he had ever said that Indians in Natal never got justice in law courts. "I have never stated that the Indians do not get justice in the law courts, nor am I prepared to admit that they get it at all times and in all courts."[28] But the fat was in the fire. It continued to splutter.

After stopping in Madras for a fortnight Gandhiji went to Calcutta. He arrived there on November 10. Knowing none there, he took a room in the Great Eastern Hotel. Mr Ellerthorpe of the London *Daily Telegraph*, whom he casually met, invited him to the Bengal Club where he was staying, forgetting that the Imperial capital was also the capital of the *pucca saheb* tradition, where the cult of the "ruling race" reigned supreme (See p. 117). "Natives" were barred from the drawing room of this Club. Embarrassed, he with profuse apologies took his Indian guest to his own room.

Surendranath Banerjee was the Uncrowned King of Bengal. He held out little hope when Gandhiji called on him. "You must enlist the sympathy of Maharajas and meet the representatives of the British India Association," he advised. Gandhiji met Raja Sir Pyarimohan Mukarji and Maharaja Jyotindranath Tagore. They gave him the cold shoulder and told him it was not easy to call a public meeting in Calcutta. At the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* he was taken for a "wandering Jew" and treated as such. The *Bengalee* went one better—kept him on the doormat, while an endless stream of visitors darted in and out of the editor's room. Finally admitted, he was cut short in his recital with the curt remark from the editor, "There is no end to the number of visitors like you. I am not disposed to listen to you. You had better go."

The rebuff, though painful, did not put him off. It only brought home to him that the people needed to be further educated on the South African Indian question. He went to the *Statesman*. Mr Paul Knight told him of the keen interest he took in the question. Mr Saunders of the *Englishman* identified himself completely with him—being satisfied after a searching examination that "I had spared neither will nor pains to place before him an impartial statement of the case even of the white man in South Africa and to appreciate it". What impressed him particularly was Gandhiji's devotion to truth and freedom from the least trace of exaggeration. The lesson Gandhiji learnt was that "we win justice quickest by rendering justice to the other party".

The encouragement given by Mr Saunders inspired hope in Gandhiji that he would after all be able to hold a public meeting in

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Calcutta. "I believe the meeting here will come off on Friday week," he wrote to Talyarkhan, but on November 11, two days before the date fixed, he received from Natal the following telegram redirected by the Agents at Bombay of Messrs Dada Abdulla and Co., "SEND MOHANLAL ROAD ENFORCING INDIANS TO LOCATIONS."

Thinking that "road" was perhaps an error for "Rhodes" he interpreted the message to mean that the Cape Government had empowered the East London Municipality to remove the Indians to locations (see p. 465) and this decision was being enforced despite the fact that the whole Indian question was pending before Mr Chamberlain. Later he discovered that the word used in the original telegram was not "road" or "Rhodes" but "Raad" i.e. the Transvaal Parliament, and the Indians affected were not the Cape Indians but the Indians in Kruger's Republic against whom the De Villier's award (see pp. 529-530) was now being put into action.

He decided forthwith to go back to Bombay. In a letter to the *Englishman*, explaining why as a result of the telegram that he had received, it had become necessary for him to go back to South Africa by the first available steamer, he described the frantic efforts that were being made by the various Governments there to put pressure on the Colonial Office in London to get a decision on the Indian question satisfactory from the point of view of the South African whites. The Mayors in various towns had been in conference passing resolutions pressing for the restriction on the Indians' influx; Sir Gordon Sprigg, who had succeeded as the Cape Premier after Rhodes' fall (see p. 464), was in active communication with the Colonial Office and was even hopeful of satisfactory results; Mr Maydon, Member of the Natal Parliament, had been telling audiences in Natal that the friends of the Colony were vigorously pursuing the matter on their behalf in England. One of the objects of Sir John Robinson's visit to England was to discuss State matters with Mr Chamberlain. These were only some of the forces, he went on to remark, that were at work against the Indians. Describing in a letter of sympathy the whole struggle as "unequal", an ex-member of Parliament had written: "Justice is on your side."[29] The matter was bound before long to be decided, he concluded. Now was the time for the Anglo-Indian and the Indian public to bestir themselves and throw in their full weight on the side of right and justice "or it will be never". A distinguished Conservative had written to Gandhiji, "the wrong is so serious that it has only to be known . . . to be remedied".[30]

Before setting off for Bombay Gandhiji wired to the agent of Dada Abdulla and Co. to arrange for the passage back to South Africa by the first available boat for him and his family. Dada Abdulla had only recently purchased the s.s. *Courland*. He insisted on Gandhiji travelling by that boat, offering to take him and his family free of charge.

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Gandhiji gratefully accepted the offer.

On November 16, at a meeting of the citizens of Poona, held under the auspices of the Sarvajanik Sabha at Joshi Hall, he spoke on the grievances of the Indians in South Africa. Dr. Bhandarkar presided. After Gandhiji had spoken, Lokamanya Tilak moved a resolution sympathising with the Indians in South Africa and authorising a committee consisting of Dr. Bhandarkar, himself and Professor Gokhale to prepare and submit to the Government of India a memorial on the disabilities under which Indians in South Africa were labouring.

5

When a dead set was being made at the Natal Indian Congress, Gandhiji, it will be remembered, had, to put heart into the people, promised them to try to persuade a number of Indian barristers to come over from India and help them (See pp. 484-487). After his Bombay address two friends, Shri Keshavrao Deshpande and F.S. Talyarkhan, had expressed their resolve to come and join him in South Africa. One of the three Parsi contemporaries of Gandhiji in London, Talyarkhan had returned by the same boat with him after being called to the bar. The other two were Pestonji Padshah, and his brother Barjorji Padshah, the kind-hearted eccentric genius, who out of pity for the horses would not ride in tramcars and despite his prodigious memory was too independent-minded to sit for any examination. When Gandhiji had first met Pestonji he was already famous for his erudition. The golden link between them, however, was vegetarianism—to which few Parsis took. Prothonotary in the Bombay Court, he was now working on the preparation of a higher Gujarati dictionary. He refused pointblank to help Gandhiji in "enticing" men of promise to South Africa, when the mother country needed the services of every one of her sons. He did not like even Gandhiji's going there. To keep him from going he pleaded, "Let us win self-government here, and we shall automatically help our countrymen there." Finding him inflexible in his resolve, he added, "I know I cannot prevail upon you, but I will not encourage anyone of your type to throw in his lot with you."

He proved as good as his word. But instead of taking to heart the rebuff, Gandhiji only admired his Parsi friend's love for the country and for the mother tongue. The lesson he learnt was that "a patriot cannot afford to ignore any branch of service to the motherland".[31] His Parsi friend's example made him all the more determined to cultivate the plot that Providence had allotted to him. "Far from giving up my work in South Africa, I became firmer in my resolve." In the words of the *Gita*,

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this is better, that one do
His own task as he may, even though he fail,
Than take tasks not his own . . . . . .

In a letter to Talyarkhan from Madras Gandhiji had set forth his proposal for partnership in professional as well as public work. Hitherto his only source of income had been the retainers to the tune of £300 paid by the Indian merchants. But if they started practice on their own, their earnings for the next six months, he estimated, should come to £70 a month. As against it their joint expenses could be set down at £50 a month if they shared the same house.

This is the lowest estimate. And I should expect to earn that amount single-handed doing the Indian work side by side. It would not surprise me however if we earn £150 per month.

This much I can promise. You should pay your own passage to Natal. Your expenses of admission will be paid out of the office. The expenses of your board and lodging also will be defrayed out of the office earnings. That is to say, if there is any loss during the six months' trial, it shall be borne by me. On the other hand if there are any profits you share them. . . . I have no doubt that your connection in Bombay is such that a six months' absence from Bombay would not mar your future career there if you are disappointed in Natal. . . . In any case, I cannot be too plain in saying that no one in our position should go to South Africa with a view to pile money. You should go there with a spirit of self-sacrifice. You should keep riches at an arm's length. They may then woo you. If you bestow your glances on them, they are such a coquette that you are sure to be slighted. That is my experience in South Africa.

With his characteristic thoroughness, which did not ignore the minutest detail, he sketched out their joint *menage*.

Boarding together might present a slight difficulty. If you could manage with vegetarian food, I could place on the table most palatable dishes cooked both in the English as well as the Indian style. If, however, that be not possible, we shall have to engage another cook. At any rate that cannot be an insurmountable difficulty. . . . I do hope you will not allow pecuniary considerations come in your way. I am sure you will be able to do much in South Africa—more indeed than I may have been instrumental in doing. . . .

It will be a very good thing if you could accompany me to Natal. I may mention that if the s.s. *Courland* is available by that time I might secure you a free passage.[32]

But this again was not to be. A Parsi, C. M. Cursetji, who was then a Small Cause Court Judge, weaned Talyarkhan from his resolve as he had "plotted" his friend's marriage. Talyarkhan "had to choose

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between marriage and going to South Africa, and chose the former". He became a high-placed Government official. There was no temptation of marriage in Deshpande's case. "But he, too, did not come." At Zanzibar Gandhiji met one of the Tyebjis and tried to persuade him to accompany him, but with no better success.

Gandhiji's dissertation on the attitude towards riches in his letter to Talyarkhan is almost a paraphrase of a commentary on an aphorism in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*. As such it has a deep significance in terms of his religious growth, which led him before many years to embrace the ideal of voluntary poverty. Nearly three decades and a half later, addressing a gathering in a London private church, he expounded its philosophy thus:

> Those who have actually followed out this vow of voluntary poverty to . . . the fullest possible extent for a human being . . . testify that when you dispossess yourself of everything you have, you really possess all the treasures of the world . . . those who will follow this out will really find that they are never in want. . . .[33]

Despite his parsimony, the £75 that the Natal Indian Congress had sanctioned towards his expenses had by now been all spent. He had, indeed, spent some £40 out of his pocket. Very characteristic of him was the statement of the expenses he prepared to be submitted on his return to South Africa. Among the items entered in it are: Barber, 4 annas; Washerman, 8 annas; Pickwick pens, 6 annas; *Pankha* coolie, 2 annas; Theatre, Rs. 4; Servant Lalu, Rs. 10; Guide, 2 annas; Bhangi, 8 annas; Magician, 8 annas; Trick man, 6 pies; Charity, 8 annas; Water, 6 pies; and Poor man, 1 anna!

In the beginning of December 1896 Gandhiji set sail for South Africa. With him were his wife, their two sons, Harilal and Manilal, and Gokuldas the only son of his widowed sister. Another steamer, the s.s. *Naderi*, also set sail for Durban at the same time. Between them they had about 800 passengers on board.

Even while he was in India ominous rumblings had reached there from South Africa. But as to what they portended neither Gandhiji nor any of the eight hundred passengers sailing with him on the two ships had at this time the faintest idea.

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APPENDIX A

ACTING POLITICAL AGENT'S ORDERS TO THE RANA OF PORBANDAR TO SEND HIS DEWAN, KABA GANDHI, TO ATTEND AS MEMBER OF HIS COURT

City Office
to
Rana Shri Vikmatji, Porbandar.

I, Colonel S. C. Law, Acting Political Agent, Kathiawar Division, appoint your *Karbhari* Azam Karamchand Uttamchand as member to decide a question between me, on the one side, and Bhayat Bhupatsanghji of Rajkot State, on the other, relating to one-third rights in the village of Mundhara and write to request you to arrange for him to attend our office at Rajkot at 10 A.M. sharp on 5th August 1870 in connection with the said question. It is hoped that there will be no shilly-shallying of any kind in the matter.

Acting Political Agent.

Dated 22nd July, 1870
Sd. (Dulerai V. Raghunathrai)
Superintendent of Records
(Daftardar).

[File of letters received from European Officers—*Samvat 1926.*]

[See page 180

APPENDIX B

NOTIFICATION APPOINTING KABA GANDHI MEMBER OF RAJASTHANIK COURT

The following Notification of the Establishment of the Rajasthanik Court is republished for general information :—

Kattywar Political Agency,
Rajkot, 1st September 1873.

Sd/- J. B. Peile,
Acting Political Agent.

Political Department

The Honourable the Governor in Council is pleased to publish the following for general information:—

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The Rajasthanik Court of Kattywar is established with the sanction of the Government of India and Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for India for the hearing of claims about Giras made by Bhayads or Moolgrasias against their Talukdars.

The Rules for the establishment and regulation of the Court, which have been approved by the Government of India and Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State, are republished below.

According to the Rules of the Court, Lieutenant-Colonel S. C. Law has been appointed by Government to be President of the Court, and the following six members of the Court have been selected by Government from a list of twelve proposed by the Durbars:—

Madhowrao Umbashunker	Veljee Devjee
Jyntilal Venilal	Krustnarao Pandoorung
Krumchund Otumchund	Jyashunker Lalshunker

The Rajasthanik Court has jurisdiction throughout Kattywar with the powers of the Chief Political Court of a Prant in regard to the class of cases which belong to its jurisdiction. The decrees and orders of the Court will be recognised by the Courts of the Kattywar Agency.

The Rajasthanik Court will sit at Rajkot, or at any other place within the province of Kattywar which from time to time may be found most convenient.

[From a Collection of Kathiawad Political Agency's Circulars, Orders, Notification, Rules and C., from 1864 to 1905 pp. 98-99. (Kathiawar Agency Gazette dated 4th September 1873 Vol. XX Page 213).]

[See page 181

APPENDIX C

KABA GANDHI'S APPOINTMENT AS *KARBHARI*, RAJKOT STATE

No. 16

MEMORANDUM TO MR PEILE FROM THAKORE SHRI BAVAJI RAJ, RAJKOT STATE.

We present our compliments and write to say that the post of *Karbhari* here was held by Syed Hamid. He has now resigned and we have appointed Gandhi Karamchand Otamchand in his place. This is submitted for Your Honour's information.

Dated 16th November, 1874.

[Copy from Miscellaneous Outward Register, Rajkot State—1874-75.]

[See page 182

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APPENDIX D

KABA GANDHI CONFIRMED AS DEWAN WITH FULL POWERS

S.S.P.A.N.
R.K.M.A.
2113.

OFFICE ORDER

Being satisfied, from what we have seen of his work so far, that Azam Karamchand is a loyal, honest and obedient servant of the State, we invest him with the following powers and trust that he will always prove himself worthy of our trust. He shall hold himself responsible for all matters that he has been attending hitherto including revenue, in addition to what he is being entrusted with under this order. He shall supervise the city office accounts and the (State's) store with the same care and vigilance as has characterised him in everything so far, and take all necessary action to promote the best interests of the State.

As from today, Azam Karamchand is vested with the following powers :

(1) All pay-bills and orders relating to recurring expenditure which used to be signed by us till now, as also papers in respect of any monies paid under written orders, shall henceforth be signed by Azam Karamchand. Financial orders issued under our oral instructions shall be signed by us.

(2) All applications from the State servants in respect of leave of any kind or any other matter, shall be submitted to us through Azam Karamchand who shall forward them with his remarks thereon.

(3) Papers relating to judicial correspondence with the Gondal State and appeals of all kinds shall continue to be forwarded by the Azam Magistrate directly to us.

(4) All papers relating to judicial work in respect of disputes arising from trade relations between this State and other States and Talukas, except the State of Gondal, shall be forwarded by the officers concerned to Azam Karamchand and the latter shall correspond directly under his signature with the State or the Taluka concerned. He shall also try his best to expand our trade to its maximum capacity.

(5) All correspondence—except such correspondence as has been specifically ordered to be addressed directly to us, and replies to orders received directly from us—shall be addressed by every officer of the State to the Chief Administrator, who shall forward the same to us with his remarks where he thinks necessary and pass suitable orders directly on all matters, unless in his judgement, a particular matter calls for personal reference to us.

(6) Orders in regard to the execution of decrees shall issue directly from us and replies thereto shall likewise be addressed directly to us.

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(7) All memoranda, etc. which may be received by Azam Davji Ravji and *Ijjat Ashar* Jadav . . . Kalji for transmission to the State shall be forwarded by them in the original, with notings thereon and their own reports in respect of them, to Azam Karamchand. The latter shall make his notes not on the originals, but on the reports accompanying them, and submit them to us in person and send replies thereto after obtaining our orders on matters which require such orders.

(8) The daily statements of receipts and expenditure of the Municipality, which are at present being submitted for our signature, shall henceforth be signed by Azam Karamchand.

(9) Appeals against the orders of the Municipal Secretary on matters within his competence, and original complaints on such matters, shall be made to Azam Karamchand. In the event of anyone being dissatisfied with the orders passed by Azam Karamchand, he shall prefer an appeal to us in person.

Orders issued under this section shall be notified in writing for public information.

(10) It is ordered that Azam Karamchand shall attend to registration of mortgages of properties held under documentary titles, registration of sale-deeds being reserved to us. But mortgages in respect of properties held without documentary titles shall not be registered pending our final decision as to the conditions of such registration.

(11) 'Bhayats' and original 'Garashiyas' shall make all applications relating to their rights relating to *garas*, *chas* and such matters to Azam Karamchand, and the latter shall forward such applications to us with his remarks. For the purpose of assisting Azam Karamchand in these matters, the clerks in our office shall treat our office and Azam Karamchand's office as one.

This order shall be forwarded for information and necessary action to Azam Karamchand, the Chief Judge, the Police Officer at Sardhar, the Legal Representative at the Residency, the Legal Representative at the Political Agent's office, the Superintendent (of Police), the Municipal Secretary, the surveyor, and the sub-Inspectors of Police at Rajkot and Kuvadva and then filed.

Paragraph 11 should be notified to the 'Bhayats' and principal 'Garashiyas' under the signatures of the respective officers of their regions.

Dated 7th November, 1876, Rajkot.

Sd/- Thakore Shri Bavaji Raj,
Rajkot State

Filed on 9-11-76
G. S. Karamchand Uttamchand,
M. K. Rajkot State

[*Rajkot State* : File of Circulars and Endorsement—Inward—1876-77.]

[See page 182

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APPENDIX E

APPOINTMENT OF KABA GANDHI AS DEWAN OF WANKANER STATE

No. 129

FROM MAHARAJA SAHEB SHRI BANESANGHJI
TO
GANDHI KARAMCHAND OTAMCHAND

This is to inform you that you have been appointed to the post of *Karbhari* in charge of the administration of our State. You will conduct the administration loyally and in a manner calculated to further the interests and rights of the State.

Your pay is fixed at Rs. 600/- p.m. (Rupees six hundred only) with an undertaking on our part to pay the same for a period of five years. In case you are relieved by us before the expiry of this period, a reliable person will stand surety (on our behalf) from whom you can claim the balance of your pay for the stipulated period. A separate undertaking to this effect will be furnished to you by the surety.

You will introduce reforms in the administration of justice and so conduct your work as to raise the prestige (of the State). You will be required to go out of Wankaner on State duty. Expenses incurred on this account will be borne by the State, including the conveyance and the attendant's charges.

For your conveyance, a horse carriage will be placed at your disposal by the State.

Suitable accommodation will be provided for your residence by the Khorda Darbar.

Sunday, 11th day of the dark half of Chaitra, year 1934 of the Vikram Era.

[Copy from Revenue Deptt. File No. 57, Daftar, No. 10, of 1878, in the Huzur Office of Wankaner.]

[See page 182

APPENDIX F

KABA GANDHI'S LETTER OF RESIGNATION FROM DEWANSHIP OF WANKANER STATE

TO

HIS HIGHNESS THE MAHARAJA SAHEB,
SHRI BANESANGHJI, WANKANER STATE.

I beg to pray as follows:—

Your Highness is aware of the conditions of my appointment, I need not therefore trouble you by recapitulating them. Under the advice of self-seeking and scheming persons your Highness has not, in all these nine months of my service, paid heed to any of my oral or written

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representations. At last, on 29th December, being directed by you to state in writing what my grievances were, I addressed a registered letter detailing the same to Pratapsanghji of Gavaridad, whom you appointed to settle the matter. But your Highness has not taken any of the steps I had asked for. I am, therefore, compelled by the difficulties of my position to submit my resignation, with the request that it may be accepted, failing which I shall leave for Rajkot on any day between the 9th and the 19th leaving my charge to be handed over by Meghji to whomsoever your Highness may order.

Wednesday, the 1st day of the dark half of Paus, the year 1935 of the Vikram Era, 8th January 1879 A.D.

Sd/- (*Fidvi*) (*Obedient Servant*),
KARAMCHAND UTTAMCHAND
With humble respects.

Wankaner.

[From the File of Papers relating to Gandhi Karamchand Uttamchand, in File No, 84, Draft No. 11 of the year 1935 of the Vikram Era, 1879, A. D. in the Huzur Court of Wankaner State.]

[See page 183

APPENDIX G

KABA GANDHI'S RESUMPTION OF DEWANSHIP OF RAJKOT STATE

St. R.P.A. No. 1 of 1879-80 F. No. 1

It was ordered that Azam Karamchand shall have a lien on his post here for one year if he should return from Wankaner within that period. Azam Karamchand having accordingly returned to his post of *Karbhari*, he is ordered to assume charge of his post as soon as possible from Jatashankar, and report his having done so.

Azam Jatashankar discharged the duties of the *Karbhari* of this State for more than eleven months. He was found to be fit for the work during this period.

This order should be shown to Azam Karamchand and Jatashankar, and should be circulated to all the departments of the State; necessary letters in this connection should be addressed to the Asstt. Political Agent for his information.

Azam Karamchand's application in this connection, of 25th February last, is attached herewith.

I.S.
St. Rajkot

Rajkot, 4th April, 1879

[From the Rajkot State Huzur Court File of Office Orders, Endorsements and Circulars—1879-80 (P. No. 13).]

[See page 182

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APPENDIX H

GANDHIJI'S EARLIEST PLAINT

In his *Autobiography* Gandhiji has recorded that after his complete failure in the courts as a Barrister he was at last able to earn a modest income by drafting petitions and representations.

As one of the earliest plaints drawn up by him prior to his departure to South Africa, the following, on behalf of one Bawa Kamaldas Kandas of Madhavpur, and addressed to Sir E.C.K. Ollivant K.C.I.E., the Political Agent, Kathiawar, with whom Gandhiji had a quarrel (See p. 286), which resolved him to seek his fortune abroad will be found to be of special interest:

TO

SIR E. C. K. OLLIVANT K.C.I.E.,
POLITICAL AGENT,
KATHIAWAR.

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF BAWA KAMALDAS KANDAS OF MADHAVPUR UNDER PORBUNDER

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR HONOUR,

I the above-named petitioner beg most respectfully to appeal against the order dated 27th October 1891 of Rao Bahadur S. P. Pandit the Administrator of Porbunder. An application for reviewing the order was presented without any avail 23-5-92. The order petitioned against deprives me of some of the *Dharmada* (religious endowment) Land which I enjoyed for more than a century and imposes for the first time an Acre *Vero* (land revenue) on the land that has not been taken away from me.

2. The land formerly enjoyed by me consisted of two parts one enjoyed under two documents (Appendices B and C)* and another enjoyed by right of long possession. The learned Administrator has been pleased to take away some of the land described in the two documents and to deprive me entirely of the other part. As to the part he has allowed me to retain, he has changed the nature of the tenancy and levied an Acre *Vero* on my lands.

3. It will be convenient for Your Honour if I showed the matter of my petition in a clearer form. The lands claimed by me to be mine are the following as shown in the judgment (Appendix A)*;—

	Acres.	Gunthas
"1. Barkhali Map No. 2 Survey No. – field named Chakarkotho	6	31
2. Barkhali Map No. 3 Survey No. – field named Barvanti	8	0
3. Barkhali Map No. 20 Survey No. – field Barvanti	4	1

* not reproduced

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4. Barkhali Map No. 4 Survey No. – field named Gedi	31	27
5. Barkhali Map No. 6 Survey No. – field named Pad in Dantvao Sim	42	27
6. Barkhali Map No. 17 Survey No. – field named and containing a math	8	15
Total	101	21"

The above is the result of the new survey.

4. Out of it items Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 5 of claim have been allowed to me in pursuance of two documents* appended hereto and marked B and C, but the nature of the holding has been changed and some part of it has been taken away from me as having been encroached upon.

No. 4 has been disallowed altogether for want of proof of possession as alleged in the judgment.

No. 6 has been allowed to me but as to that by the judgment I am to be expressly treated as a mere tenant at will.

And the land that has been allowed to remain in my possession has been made liable to a payment of *Vero*.

I beg to appeal against all the Counts above-mentioned.

5. With respect to the first Count, the item No. 1 claim is not interfered with as to the quantity. But from the Nos. 2, 3, 5, much has been taken away from me. They include the lands mentioned in the document marked B in the appendix*. As stated in the Appendix B,* the whole amounts to 95 Vighas. The document was passed in *St.* (*Samvat*) 1842 —more than a century ago. According to the new survey the whole of it, i.e., the Barvanti land (=12 Acres) and the Dantvao *sim* (site) (=42 Acres and 27 Gunthas) amounts to 51 Acres and 27 Gunthas (a guntha being equal to one-fortieth of an acre). After the judgment was passed a surveyor came and made out that the whole of the Barvanti land amounted to 30 Vighas counting 2½ Vighas for one Acre. So I was deprived of 10 Vighas of that land as I was entitled to only 20 Vighas according to the document. A surveyor came again about two or three months ago and measured the Dantvao *sim* at 126 Vighas counting three Vighas for one Acre. No one knows why the Acre was now valued at 3 Vighas. In this case I was deprived of 51 Vighas of land because the document entitled me to only 75 Vighas. The reason for this is shown in the judgment itself which says, "It is beyond question that there has been unauthorised occupation as well as encroachment in this case. There is no title to more than what is granted by the two *Lekhs* (documents) at the outside".

6. This reasoning seems quite just and logical *apparently* but a little close examination will disclose that it is a mistaken reasoning. The

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mistake committed is what is known in logic as the ambiguous middle. What is "the Vigha"? The moment the question is answered the whole of the specious reasoning is upset. Your Honour well knows that the Vigha is a very uncertain measure. There are decisions to show that Vigha may mean anything; it is therefore evident that any *apparent* increase upon the quantity mentioned in the document is not to be put down as encroachment. There are moreover authoritative decisions of the Rajasthanik Sabha where such questions often crop up showing that in such cases a long possession of the land mentioned in the document is to be confirmed although the same may seem to be more than as stated in the deed. In its decision of the case Jebalia Ram Jetha and others of Gugarala vs. Vala Gorkha Mehram No. 58 of 1877-78 the Sabha says: "We do not compel petitioners to restore any land because their possession is of long standing and has hitherto been unchallenged. *And the old method of measuring was rough and inaccurate*".

7. Your Honour is not unaware of the old times when there was no real survey, when they did everything at haphazard. It will therefore be conceded that the old documents cannot be read by the light of the new survey system. If it were otherwise, many peaceful possessions will be disturbed and no man's property under the old documents would be considered safe. It would seem that it is my misfortune that the extent of the land in Appendix B* is given; for in the Appendix C,* no mention is made as to the extent of the land and so my possession of it is not disturbed.

8. 2ndly although Mr Pandit recognises the documents and allows possession of the lands on the strength of them, he has been pleased to alter the nature of my possession. Says the learned Administrator, "Bighas (75) out of *Pat* (tract of land) in Dantvao *sim* . . . should be confirmed as *Sadavart* (charitable free Kitchen) with claimant *manager*. . . . The holding should be treated as *Dharmada Pasaita* (gift from a religious endowment for services rendered) and should be inalienable and *tenable* subject to the condition that a *Sadavart* should be regularly kept and also that *it be held during the pleasure of the Durbar. It shall also pay Vero at* As 4 (four) per Acre of *Baret* (unirrigated) land and As 8 (eight) per Acre of *Vadi* (orchard) land.

9. The only condition mentioned in the document (Appendix C)* as to the Chakarkotho is this. "I will observe the *Bhog* (enjoyment) and *Vero* of the land by you as long as you will give *Sadavart*, as you do at present upon condition of peaceful conduct". I would request Your Honour particularly to mark the sentence "I will observe *Bhog* and *Vero* of the land by you." In the second document (Appendix B)* the condition is of a similar nature "out of it the land and the *Vadi*

* not reproduced

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are given to you. You should cultivate them, sow into them and conduct *Sadavart* according to its particulars. We will observe it (this *lekh*) as long as you conduct the *Sadavart*". Is there anything in this to show that I am to hold the land during *the Durbar's pleasure*? If the documents are to be relied upon it is difficult to see the justness of this additional condition.

10. Mr Pandit does not stop here. He imposes a *Vero* of 4 As per Acre of *Baret* land and As 8 (eight) per Acre of *Vadi* land. Were these things contemplated by the documents? In one of them it is expressly mentioned that *I am to enjoy the Vero*. I have been given the full ownership by the documents. How the learned Administrator can now force these new and uncalled for impositions on the land, it is beyond comprehension.

11. Indeed the imposition of the *Vero* changes me from a full owner of *Dharmada* land into virtually a Tenant at will. I hope confidentlly that your Honour will do away with this new imposition. A *Vero* has already been exacted for the last year (22nd June 1892). I would request Your Honour to cause the sum given as *Vero* for the *Sadavart* land to be returned. It is to be mentioned further that my claim was inquired into by Mr Lely some time Administrator of Porbunder. He did not think it fit to take away any land from me. The *Vero* matter too was inquired into by the learned officer but he did not think that my land was to be subjected to a payment of *Vero*. He has also made a *shero* (endorsement) to that effect. I have applied for a copy of the *shero*, I have paid for the search and the copy and yet, although it is now more than three months (28-6-92) since I applied, I have not been favoured with a true copy. If your Honour will send for it, the truth of my statement will be seen by you.

12. In one of the documents (Appendix A)* it will be found that some words at the end are missing. It is surmised (and the surmise is not incompatible with the whole tenor of the document) that the land mentioned therein is passed as કૃષ્ણાર્પણ (endowed to a diety). Now the word means that the giver can on no account take away the land. He can do so only on pain of a very grave sin.

13. Apart from all this the very judgment of Mr Pandit is self-contradictory. He says "the holding should be treated as *Dharmada Pasaita*. . . . It shall also pay *Vero* at 4 As. . . . ." Now I submit that the very word *Pasatia* denotes that the land is rent free. In the decision in Mukhtiar Khan and Imamkhan of Pajod under Gidad vs. the Gidad Durbar and the Ahirs of Pajod (No. 63 of 1878-79) the Rajasthanik Sabha refers with approval to the decision of the Gidad State *Karbhari* and says . . . "the word *Pasaita* here means (rent free)

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and not on *Pasaita* tenure". It says further in the same decision: "There can be no question but that the interpretation of this *Parvana* (Permit) i.e. as to the meaning of the word *Parvana* in it is correct as given by both Colonel Law and the Gidad court". Thus your Honour will see that to admit on the one hand that *my holding is Dharmada Pasaita* and on the other to say *that it will be subject to a Vero payment is a pure contradiction in terms.*

14. Lastly Mr Pandit disallows the item No. 4 claim, i.e., he deprives me of the field named Gedi saying, "The two *lekhs* produced relate to items of claim Nos. 2, 3, 5 and to item No. 1. There is no *lekh* as to any other part of the claim (item No. 4). There is no *Vahivat* or claimant's account books produced to show enjoyment by way of receipt for revenue of the fields. There is no proof of long possession". Indeed there are no *Vahivat* books to show possession of the land referred to but then there are none also for the rest of the land allowed by Mr Pandit. The truth is that my holding is not so large as to require any such *Vahivat*. The produce, whatever it was, was used for the purposes of the *Sadavart* and the maintenance of myself and chelas. But to say that there is no proof of possession is far from being true. I produced two documents to prove that the field Gedi belonged to me. In one of the documents dated 1856 which is a mortgage deed the boundary of the mortgaged property is described wherein it is said "આથમણી કોરે બાવા મગનીરામનું પસાયતું છે." "In the west is situated the *Pasaita* of Bawa Magniram". Magniram was my ancestor. In another document dated *Kartak Vad* 13th 1922 my field is thus mentioned "ઉગમણી કોરે બાવા મંછારામનું પસાયતું છે." "In the east is situated the *Pasaita* of Bawa Mancharam". In a third document dated second *Jeth Vad* 4 *St.* 1922 the southern boundary of my field is described, "In the north is situated the *Pasaita* of Bawa Jeramdas Sarupdas." Thus then not only do the documents above referred to prove that I have a field but they give also the western, eastern and southern boundaries of it. Moreover in two of the documents the mortgaged property is described as a "Gedi field", thus proving that my field too is a part of Gedi. If the truth of these statements is doubted I am ready to produce these books for Your Honour's inspection. I did produce them before Mr Pandit.

15. Again I offered to produce witnesses to prove my possession of the field but the offer was not accepted. So then it is evident that it is not a defective title, but my misfortune that Mr Pandit has thought fit to dispossess me of my field although there was as will have been seen by Your Honour no want of proof.

16. By the decision, moreover, if it is not to be reversed by Your Honour, I cease to be owner of the *Math* (monastery), the very seat of the god and used for distribution of the *Sadavart* and temporary residence of the Khakhis &c. As to this Mr Pandit says, "claimant should be

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allowed to occupy the *Math* but should pay *Vaje Vero* (horse-tax) for the land and fruit trees &c. in it as a *Raoli* (Government) tenant." With due deference to Mr Pandit I beg to protest against such an invasion of my rights. Had there been taken witnesses to prove long possession of the *Math* every one in Madhavpur would have deposed to the fact that I have been enjoying the *Math* from times immemorial. Does not common sense suggest that a *Sadavart* without a place for the distribution of the same could not be conceived and it is to be hoped that it would not be argued that I have been living in it as a *Raoli* tenant. What I have said with regard to the Gedi field applies with a greater force to the *Math*. If the *Math* were *Raoli* one would think that the whole land was *Raoli*. It is evident from the judgment that the *Vaje Vero* for the land of the *Math* and fruit trees is a new imposition flowing from the turning me into a *Raoli* tenant. Up to now I have never paid any *Vero* whatever.

17. In conclusion I hope that on a consideration of the above facts and arguments Your Honour will order that

the part taken away from the land described in the Appendix B, and also the field in item No. 4 claim be returned to me,

that no *vero* be levied on my land and that the condition that the land be held during the pleasure of the Durbar be abrogated,

that the tenancy of the *Math* be treated as *Dharmada Pasaita* as is the case with the lands in the Appendix B* &c.,

and that the *Vero* already exacted be returned to me,

and for this act of justice and kindness I shall for ever pray &c., &c.

Rajkot
Dated 15th September 1892.
Drafted by
M. K. Gandhi
Barrister-at-Law

[See page 285

APPENDIX J

A NOTE ON ORNITHOLOGICAL ACTIVITIES OF ALLAN OCTAVIAN HUME

Having failed to obtain any information from any source in India about the subsequent fate of the ornithological museum and library, "the largest in the world where Asiatic birds were concerned", that Allan Octavian Hume had bequeathed to the Indian Government (See p. 124), I enquired from the Librarian, India Office Library, London. To him I am indebted for the information given below:

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He (A. O. Hume) also of course founded the ornithological Journal *Stray Feathers*, in 1872, and edited this for several years. The museum which he had collected at Simla over 25 years had to be left by him when he was transferred in 1879 to the Revenue Board at Allahabad. He temporarily made his collection over to the Government of India, still hoping to use it as the basis of his proposed full-scale work on all aspects of Indian ornithology. In 1884 however, a very large proportion of his manuscript notes were stolen and destroyed. Following this, he abandoned hopes of completing his work, and in 1885 the contents of his museum, comprising at that time 63,000 skins and 19,000 eggs, were presented to the British Museum, Natural History, in London. This donation was of so important a nature that Dr. Bowdler Sharpe, head of the Ornithological Department at the British Museum, himself came out to Simla to take over the collection.

Such of his notes as were not destroyed, Hume presented to E. W. Oates, who used them for the second edition of Hume's own *Nests and Eggs of Indian Birds*, and also for the *Fauna of British India* volumes which commenced publication in 1889.

PUBLISHED WORKS ON ORNITHOLOGY BY ALLAN OCTAVIAN HUME

1. *Catalogue of Birds, Eggs, and Nests*, Calcutta, 1868. (A catalogue of the Simla Museum).
2. *My Scrap Book: or Rough Notes on Indian Zoology and Ornithology*. 2 vols., Calcutta, 1869-70.
3. *The Nests and Eggs of Indian Birds*, Calcutta, 1873. 2nd ed., edited by E. W. Oates, 3 vols., London, 1889-90.
4. *The Indian Ornithological Collectors vade-mecum*, London, 1874.
5. *List of the Birds of India*, . . . corrected to 1879, Calcutta, 1879.
6. *The Game Birds of India, Burma and Ceylon*, 3 vols., Calcutta, 1879-81.

All these volumes, apart from the 1st edition of No. 3 are recorded as being held by the Indian National Library, Calcutta.

[Letter No. IOL/F9 dated 5th September, 1963, to Pyarelal by J. H. McIlwaine for the Librarian, India Office Library, London].

APPENDIX K

FRANCHISE AMENDMENT BILL, 1894

(ACT NO. 25)

Whereas it is expedient to amend the Law relating to the Franchise and to except therefrom persons belonging to Asiatic races not accustomed to the exercise of franchise rights under Parliamentary institutions.

Be it therefore enacted by the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Council and Legis-

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lative Assembly of Natal, as follows:

1. Save as in Section 2 of this Act excepted, persons of Asiatic extraction shall not be qualified to have their names inserted in any list of Electors or in any Voters' Roll, or to vote as Electors within the meaning of Section 22 of the Constitution Act of 1893, or of any Law relating to the election of members of the Legislative Assembly.

2. The provisions of Section 1 of this Act shall not apply to persons of the class mentioned in that Section whose names are rightly contained in any Voters' Roll in force at the date of the promulgation of this Act, and who are otherwise competent and qualified as electors.

3. This Act shall not come into operation unless and until the Governor notifies by Proclamation in the *Natal Government Gazette* that it is Her Majesty's pleasure not to disallow the same, and thereafter it shall come into operation upon such day as the Governor shall notify by the same or any other proclamation.

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FRANCHISE AMENDMENT BILL, 1896

(ACT NO. 8)

To amend the Law relating to the Franchise:

Whereas it is expedient to amend the Law, relating to the Franchise,

Be it therefore enacted by the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly of Natal, as follows:—

1. Act No. 25, 1894, shall be and the same is hereby repealed.

2. Save those who come under the operation of Section 3 of this Act, no persons shall be qualified to have their names inserted in any List of Electors or in any Voters' Roll, or to vote as Electors within the meaning of Section 22 of the Constitution Act of 1893, or of any Law relating to the election of members of the Legislative Assembly, who (not being of European origin) are Natives, or descendants in the male line of Natives, of countries which have not hitherto possessed *elective representative institutions*, unless they shall first obtain an order from the Governor in Council exempting them from the operation of this Act.

3. The provisions of Section 2 of this Act shall not apply to persons of the class mentioned in that Section whose names are rightly contained in any Voters' Roll in force at the date of the promulgation of this Act, and who are otherwise competent and qualified as electors.

Note:

After amendment the Section 2 of the Act read as:—

. . . elective representative institutions founded on the Parliamentary franchise. . . .

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APPENDIX L

METHODS OF RECRUITMENT AND SUBSEQUENT TREATMENT OF INDIAN INDENTURED LABOUR

Totaramji Sannadhya was an ex-indentured Indian labourer. On his return from Fiji after twenty-one years he with his wife came to Gandhiji's Ashram at Sabarmati. They lived there for many years till their death, loved and respected by everybody who came in contact with them. This is what he writes in his Autobiography of how he was trapped by an unscrupulous recruiting agent:

One day I was sitting near the police station in Prayag (U.P.) deeply worried over my financial condition when a stranger asked me whether I would like to have a job. I replied 'yes'. He said he would find me one after my heart. I told him I could not afford to be absent from my home for more than six months. He said I should be free to give up the job at any time and return home. He offered to take me to Jagannath Puri for *darshan*. I believed him. He brought me to his house where there were about 100 men and 60 women huddled together in two separate parts of the courtyard, trying to cook rice over damp sticks which refused to burn. I was curious to know how the women were there. Surely they did not come in search of a job. I tried to inquire but the agent had sternly forbidden any communication with them. We were virtual prisoners. Nobody was allowed to go out of the compound. . . . We were asked to deposit for safe custody whatever cash or other belongings—clothes, bedding, utensils etc.—we might have. Willy-nilly we did what we were told.

The next day, before being taken before a magistrate for the legal proceedings, we were tutored to reply all questions by the magistrate in the affirmative, otherwise we should be prosecuted and sent to prison. The magistrate asked us only one question—whether we were willing to go to Fiji. He did not tell us where Fiji was, what we were expected to do on reaching there and what would be the penalty if we refused. It took the magistrate hardly 20 minutes to dispose of 165 recruits . . . .We were next put on a special train to be taken to the Immigration Depot. We were strictly forbidden to talk to or communicate with anybody on the way. The Immigration Officer told us . . . that we should find Fiji to be 'a veritable paradise . . .' In the end he asked us if any of us had money or any other belongings with him. The 'tout', who was standing behind him, made us a sign to say nothing in reply to that question; we should get everything back. But as soon as the magistrate left the court, the 'tout' also disappeared. We never saw his face again or any of our belongings.

. . . On further reflection, I began to have misgivings about binding myself to a five year term of labour in a distant place. . . . I told the officer I did not wish to go to Fiji . . . .The officer turned me over to two Bengali clerks 'to bring me round' . . . .Finding me determined in my resolve they had me shut up in a room and kept without food or water till

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realising my helplessness I gave in.

Another victim was a school boy. He was recruited for Natal. He has similarly recorded:

We were well-to-do folk. I was studying in the fourth grade. One day, going out with some of my school fellows for bathing, I got separated from them. While I was looking for them I was accosted by a stranger. He asked me if I desired a job. . . . 'What sort of a job?' I asked. 'To teach to read and write at Jagannath Puri,' he answered. I said I did not wish to go so far away from my parents. He said I was a fool to miss an opportunity of enjoying the cool sea-breeze, living in the presence of the Lord of the Universe and returning to my parents a rich man . . . I was deceived. . . . He took me to his home and locked me in. . . . Accidentally my eye caught a notice in Hindi and Urdu pasted on the door of the house to the effect that labourers for Natal, Trinidad, Fiji and other islands were recruited there. . . . When the 'tout' returned I told him that I did not wish to serve as a labourer and asked for my school books and clothes to be returned to me. He asked me the reason. I pointed out to him . . . the notice pasted at his door. He flew into a rage and said some rogue must have put it up there out of malice. When I persisted in my refusal, he began to abuse me and said, that I must refund the fare he had spent on bringing me there, and slapped me into the bargain. . . . I was taken aback. I was then taken before a magistrate and told under various threats to say only 'Yes sir', to all questions put by the Magistrate. Terror-stricken I did as I was bidden. I was taken to a depot in Calcutta and confined there and not permitted to go out even to answer the call of nature. I protested that I was a free man. I was told I was to consider myself worse than a prisoner. I began to weep disconsolately. The next day the 'tout' . . . disappeared with all my books and clothes. I never again saw him or my belongings.

In regard to the treatment which the recruits received in the Immigration Depot and afterwards during the sea voyage, this is what Totaramji writes:

On coming out of the room where I was confined I found that all my fellow recruits were being served food in unclean pewter dishes. Those who objected were beaten up. . . . They were given clothes such as the prisoners wear. . . . Women were examined by male doctors. After medical examination the emigrants of varying ages were all huddled together like cattle below decks in two separate pens partitioned by a steel wire, the poop-deck being reserved for women. The space allowed to each was barely 1½ ft. by 6 ft. . . . Those who objected were told by the medical officer in charge to the accompaniment of abuse that they would have to be satisfied with whatever they got. After all had thus been 'accommodated' we were each given four 'dog biscuits', which we could hardly bite without soaking them

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in water first; and only five ounces of drinking water. Early next morning an officer of the ship sent some of us to cook in the ship's galleys; others were assigned the duty of keeping watch; still some others were ordered to clean the ship's latrines. Those who refused were beaten up and forced to do as ordered. Not more than one bottle of drinking water was issued twice a day to each and no one could get even a drop more in any circumstance. Rice and fish were the only food served. Many succumbed to sea-sickness and other ailments. Quite a number died. Their bodies were thrown into the sea.

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NOTES

CHAPTER I

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65 *Ibid.*

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67 Romesh Dutt, *The Economic History of India* (*Under Early British Rule*), Preface p. ix.

68 Bombay Administration Report of 1872-73, p. 41.

69 John Briggs, *The Present Land Tax in India*, pp. 393, 410, 414, & 416.

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72 *The Cambridge Shorter History*, p. 638, quoted by Reginald Reynolds, *The White Sahibs in India*, Reynald and Hitchcock, New York, (1937), p. 89.

73 Lord Minto's Minute, dated 24th November, 1810.

74 Romesh Dutt, *The Economic History of India* (*Under Early British Rule*), p. 315. According to a statement by Sir Henry Strachey of Bengal in 1813 to the Court of Directors in regard to the working of the judicial system of India, in one of the

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jails in Bengal, two hundred and nine prisoners were kept in confinement, some of them for over five months "on suspicion and without being even examined by the Magistrate". In another place, one hundred and ninety-two persons were arrested on suspicion after a robbery. "Confessions were extorted from them or fabricated against them, forty-six of them were detained in irons above a year; three of them died; the rest were proved to be innocent at trial and acquitted." In another district, according to him, 2,071 persons were arrested on suspicion between November 1808 and May 1809. In six months, forty-eight had died in jail, 278 were still under inquiry, and 1,477 were not yet examined. (*Ibid*, p. 320).

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83 *Ibid*.

84 E. Thompson & G. T. Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 253.

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100 Warren Hastings in his letter recommending the translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* to the Chairman of the East India Company, quoted by H. D. Thoreau, in his *Week on the Concord*, Chapter Monday, Walter Scott Publishing Co., London (1889), p. 117

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109 Earl of Ronaldshay, *The Heart of Aryavarta*, p. 46.

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112 In this Lord Minto "was not as unreasonable as clamour in London represented", observe Garratt and Thompson. Lord Minto's letter to the Chairman of the Directors ran:

"Pray read especially the miserable stuff . . . without one word to convince or to satisfy the mind of the heathen reader, without proof or argument of any kind, the pages are filled with hell fire, and hell fire, and still hotter fire, denounced against a whole race of men for believing in the religion which they were taught by their fathers and mothers, and the truth of which it is simply impossible it should ever have entered into their minds to doubt. Is this the doctrine of our faith? . . . . If there are two opinions among Christians on this point, I can only say that I am of the sect which believes that a just God will condemn no being without individual guilt. . . . The remainder of this tract seems to aim principally at a general massacre of the Brahmins of this country. . . ."—E. Thompson & G. T. Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 247.

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115 *Oxford History of India*, p. 722, quoted by Reginald Reynolds, *White Sahibs in India*, p. 89.

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128 Holmes, *History of the Sepoy War*, p. 124.

129 Kay and Malleson, *History of the Indian Mutiny*, ii, p. 301

130 *Ibid*, p. 77.

131 *Ibid*, p. 177.

132 *Ibid*, p. 203.

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134 Charles Ball, *Indian Mutiny*, i. p. 257.

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138 *Ibid*, p. 203.

139 E. Thompson & G. T. Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 454.

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141 Kay & Malleson, *History of the Mutiny*, ii, p. 77.

142 Holmes, *History of the Indian Mutiny*, p. 363.

143 Lieut. V. D. Majendie, *Up Among the Pandies*, p. 195, quoted by E. Thompson & G. T. Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 454.

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"In order to strengthen Soukim and to set free Egyptian troops for employment on the Nile, we have been asked to provide for a garrison composed of troops from the Native Army in India. . . . We feel it our duty, in the interests of the country of which the administration is entrusted to us, to protest once more, in the strongest terms against the policy which burdens the Indian revenues with expenditure connected with services in which India has no interest; which is unjust to India, because it applies to the payment of the Indian troops lent to England . . . because it exposes our Government to attacks to which there is no adequate answer."—J. C. Kumarappa, *Clive to Keynes*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, (1947), pp. 20-22.

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171 G. T. Wrench, *The Restoration of the Peasantries*, p. 94.

172 William Digby, *Prosperous British India*, p. 126.

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173 W. S. Lilley in his *India and Its Problems* gives the following figures of famine deaths in India:

1800-25	—	1,000,000
1825-50	—	400,000
1850-75	—	5,000,000
1875-1900	—	15,000,000

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61 *Speeches of Sri Aurobindo*, Shri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry (India), (1952), pp. 54 and 58.

62 *Speeches of Sri Aurobindo*, pp. 62-64.

63 Lines from the Bengali poem by Vivekananda "A Song I Sing to Thee", *Complete Works*, Vol. IV, p. 444.

64 M. K. Gandhi, "Not Even Half-Mast", *Young India*, 4th December, 1924, p. 398.

65 Mahadev Desai's "Weekly Letter", *Young India*, February 10, 1927, p. 44.

66 M. K. Gandhi, *From Yeravda Mandir*, Navajivan Karyalaya, Ahmedabad (India), (1935), pp. 68-70.

CHAPTER V

1 In 1872, about a hundred Sikhs of a sect known as 'Kukas' attacked a town in a state territory. They were put down with heavy loss of life. Sixty-eight of them were taken prisoners and handed over to the nearest British Deputy Commissioner, who blew away 49 of them from guns in spite of the fact that his legal powers did not extend to death and there were explicit instructions from his Commissioner to wait. What is more, the Commissioner afterwards approved what the Deputy Commissioner had done.—See Phillip Woodruff, *The Men Who Ruled India, The Guardians*, pp. 171-172.

2 Phillip Woodruff, *The Men Who Ruled India, The Guardians*, p. 44.

3 *Ibid*, pp. 172-173.

4 *Ibid*, p. 173.

5 *Ibid*, p. 174.

6 There was the *cause celebre* of a Parsi Knight, Sir Mancherji Bhownaggree, K.C.I.E. V. S. Shrinivasa Sastri has described how once when Bhownaggree was travelling in Kathiawar in company of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, an Englishman insisted on travelling with his mastiff in the same compartment with him. Sir Mancherji spoke about it to a railway official. This so enraged the Englishman that he treated the objector to some of the choicest English slang and, with the most aggrieved air in the world, complained to the crowd, that had gathered round them, of the utterly unreasonable and provoking conduct of the Indian in objecting to the company of his dog when "I never object to travelling with the natives in the same compartment." The Parsi Knight had to shift to another compartment and for the rest of the night impotently fretted and fumed at "the galling behaviour of the Europeans" which "jeopardized the permanence of British rule"!—See V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, *Life and Times of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta*, The Madras Law Journal Press, Madras, (1945), p. 47.

7 "Coming to the courts . . . we all know what kind of justice is to be expected in criminal matters under the special procedure prescribed for the trial of

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Europeans. During the last 150 years, every Indian who has met with his death at the hands of a European has either had an enlarged spleen or his death has turned out to be the result of a pure accident. There has not been a single case, so far as I am aware, of murder pure and simple." ("Pandit Motilal on Law Courts, An Appeal to Lawyers", *Young India*, October 13, 1920, p. 6).

8 Cobden's Letter to John Bright, August 24, 1857, (*Life of Cobden*, p. 672).

9 The Queen's Proclamation of 1858 read : "It is our further will that, *so far as may be*, our subjects of whatever race or creed, be freely and impartially admitted to offices in our service, the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability and integrity, duly to discharge,"—Quoted by Romesh Dutt in *The Economic History of India* (*Victorian Age*), p. 234, (Italics mine).

10 Romesh Dutt, *The Economic History of India* (*Victorian Age*), p. 233.

11 V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, *Life and Times of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta*, p. 22.

12 Edward Thompson and G. T. Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 537.

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14 Bishop Whitehead, *Indian Problems*, p. 207, quoted by Edward Thompson & G. T. Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 536.

15 V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, *Life and Times of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta*, p. 18.

16 *Ibid*, p. 19.

17 *Ibid.*

18 Wilhelm Dibelius, *England*, p. 61.

19 Edward Thompson and G. T. Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 539.

20 Sir G. Arthur, *Life of Lord Kitchener*, II, p. 177.

21 Wilhelm Dibelius, *England*, p. 62.

To mention only two instances of discrimination against Indians by Europeans, the Frere Hall at Mahabaleshwar, built largely by Indian money, by one of its rules debarred any Indian from being allowed even on the verandah of the club premises. Same with the English Gymkhana Club of Bombay.—See V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, *Life and Times of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta*, p. 47.

22 Sir Surendranath Banerjee, *A Nation in Making*, Oxford University Press, London, (1931), p. 88.

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25 Sir William Wedderburn, *Allan Octavian Hume, C. B.*, T. Fisher Unwin, London, (1913), p. 83.

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27 *Ibid*, p. 82.

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29 *Ibid*, pp. 51-52.

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31 Sir William Wedderburn, *Allan Octavian Hume, C. B.*, p. 53.

32 *Ibid*, p. 47.

33 R. P. Masani, *Dadabhai Naoroji: The Grand Old Man of India*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, (1939), p. 74.

34 C. Y. Chintamani, *Indian Politics Since the Mutiny*, Andhra University, Waltair, (1937), p. 38.

35 V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, *Life and Times of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta*, p. 29.

36 Hume's own father, Joseph Hume, had in 1808 bought one of the two seats which the rotten borough of Weymouth then possessed.—Sir William Wedderburn, *Allan Octavian Hume, C. B.*, p. 4.

37 Sir William Wedderburn, *Allan Octavian Hume, C. B.*, p. 75.

38 Ambika Charan Mazumdar, *Indian National Evolution*, p. 80.

39 *Ibid.*

40 As an illustration, in 1886 Lord Dufferin appointed a Public Service Commission to produce a Scheme which should "do justice to the claims of the natives of India to higher and more extensive employment in the public service". Out of 941 posts in the statutory Covenanted Service, one-sixth or 158 posts then belonged to the Indians. But the Public Service Commission said that 108 *should* be given. The Secretary of State changed the word "should" and said they "may" be given. Actually Indians were given only 92 in 1892. On top of it a further disability, founded on race, was laid on the Indians in 1893, when Indian Educational Service was reorganised. Previously Indians could enter in any grade in the Educational Service on equal pay with the Europeans. They were now excluded from higher grades of Service. Superior Educational Service was further divided into the higher, the I.E.S. (Indian Educational Service) to be filled by appointments made in England and the lower (Provincial Educational Service) to be filled by recruitment in India. Before 1880, both Europeans and Indians in the higher service in Bengal got the same pay, starting with Rs. 500/-. But in 1880 the pay for Indians was reduced to Rs. 333 and to Rs. 250/- in 1889. The highest pay in 1896 for an Indian was to be Rs. 700/- however long he might serve, but Englishmen got Rs. 1000/- at the end of ten years.

An unfair division of military expenditure between India and England used to be another sore point at issue. In 1894 as a result of persistent demand by the Congress, the Welby Commission recommended a small reduction in the military expenditure. This was, however, more than counter-balanced by an increase in the pay of the British soldiers, which put a fresh burden of £7,86,00 per annum on the Indian shoulders. (See B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya : *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. I, pp. 32-33).

41 C. Y. Chintamani, *Indian Politics Since the Mutiny*, p. 14.

42 It provided for some increase in the number of members in the Legislative Councils and for some members to be nominated to the Provincial Councils on the recommendation of certain public bodies, four members being selected out of these to attend the Central Legislature. The elective principle was not conceded in explicit terms. The right of interpellation was given without the right of supplementary questions. The Councils could discuss the budget in general terms, but no motions of reduction could be made.

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43 Annie Besant, *How India Wrought for Freedom*, (1915), p. 166.

44 In a letter to Morley, the Secretary of State for India, Lord Minto, referring to the unpopular Colonisation Act, which threatened the rights of settlers in the Chenab Canal area and which to Morley appeared to be a clear breach of faith wrote, "To refuse to sanction what we know to be wrong is a surrender to agitation, and an indication of weakness." (Lord Minto's letter to Mr Morley, quoted by Edward Thompson and G. T. Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 580).

45 C. Y. Chintamani, *Indian Politics Since the Mutiny*, p. 28.

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49 Lord Curzon's Letter to the Secretary of State for India, dated November 18, 1900.

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1 D. S. Sharma, *Studies in the Renaissance of Hinduism*, p.120.

2 C. Y. Chintamani, *Indian Politics Since the Mutiny*, p. 37.

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4 *The Causes of the Indian Revolt*, by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, quoted by Wilfred Cantwell Smith in *Modern Islam in India*, Minerva Book Depot, Lahore, (1943), pp. 19-20.

5 Syed Ahmed's speech at the opening of the Translation Society, Ghazipur, 1864.

6 Syed Ahmed's letter to The Scientific Society at Aligarh, dated London, October 15, 1869.

7 Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Modern Islam in India*, p. 197.

8 Wilson, *Modern Movements Among Moslems*, p. 188.

9 From the address to the Viceroy, signed among others by Sir Syed on 8-1-1877.

10 Sir Syed Ahmed, *Causes of the Indian Mutiny*.

11 *Ibid.*

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13 Sir Syed Ahmed's address delivered at the time of the inauguration of the British Indian Association, 10-5-1886.

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In fact Sir Syed went even further, as the following extracts from his writings will show:

"The word nation (Quam) applies to peoples who inhabit a country.... Remember that Hindu and Musalman are religious words; otherwise, Hindus, Musalmans and even Christians who inhabit this country — all constitute, on this account, one nation.

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When all these groups are one nation, then whatever benefits the country, which is the country of all of them, should benefit all. . . . Now the time is gone when only no account of difference in religion the inhabitants of a country should be regarded as of two different nations." (Tufail Ahmed: *Musalmanon Ka Roshan Mustaqbal*, p. 283, quoted from *Majmua-i-Lectures Sir Syed Ahmed*, p. 167 [Quoted by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, *India Divided*, Hind Kitabs Ltd., Bombay, (1947), p. 98.]

"On another occasion he said: 'Just as the Aryan people are called Hindus even so are also Musalmans Hindus, that is to say, inhabitants of Hindustan." (*Ibid.*, p. 283, quoted from *Sir Syed Ke Akhbari Mazamin.* p. 55.)

"Addressing the Hindus of the Punjab he said: 'The word Hindu that you have used for yourselves is in my opinion not correct, because that is not in my view the name of a religion. Rather every inhabitant of Hindustan can call himself a Hindu. I am therefore sorry that you do not regard me as a Hindu although I too am an inhabitant of Hindustan." (*Ibid*, p. 283, quoted from *Safarnama Punjab* – Sir Syed Ahmed, p. 139). (*Ibid*, p. 99).

15 Sir Syed Ahmed's speech at Lahore in 1884. (Italics mine).

16 Syed Ahmed, *On the Present State of Indian Politics*, p. 21

17 G. F. I. Graham : *Life and Works of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan*, 2nd edition, p. 273.

18 Lord Ellenborough, in a despatch to the Duke of Wellington, dated 18-6-43, quoted by Parulekar, in "The Future of Islam in India" *Asia*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 11 (Nov. 1928), p. 874.

19 G. F. I. Graham : *Life and Works of Sir Syed Ahemd Khan*, 2nd Edition, p. 40.

20 W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Mussalmans*, p. 173.

21 Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Modern Islam in India*, p. 196.

22 Andrews & Mukerji, *The Rise and Growth of the Congress in India*, pp. 172-173.

23 Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's letter.

24 Mary Countess of Minto, *India Minto and Morley 1905-1910*, Macmillan & Co. Ltd., London, (1935), p. 55.

25 Surendranath Banerjee, *A Nation in Making*, p. 187.

26 Prof. Haridas Mukherjee & Prof. Uma Mukherjee, *India's Fight for Freedom*, published by K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, (1958) p. 198.

27 Surendranath Banerjee, *A Nation in Making*, p. 205.

28 C. Y. Chintamani, *Indian Politics Since the Mutiny*, p. 86.

29 Surendranath Banerjee, *A Nation in Making*, (1931), p. 218.

30 *Ibid*, p. 154.

31 In Madras alone, six sturdy Congressmen, who had been critics of Government, were elevated to Judgeship and six to Executive Councillorship. In Bombay, Badruddin Tyebji and Chandavarkar, who had presided over the Congress sessions in Madras and Lahore in 1897 and 1900 respectively, and K. T. Telang became judges of the High Court. In Calcutta Ashutosh Chowdhury, who took a leading part in the agitation against the partition of Bengal, was elevated to High Court Judgeship "almost then and there". And when Lord Morley wanted to select a Law Member for the Government of India S. P. Sinha was chosen on the ground that he was "a

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Congressman although a Moderate", although on merit, Morley would have preferred Ashutosh Mukherjee, who was a leading Judge. — See B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress*, Padma Publications Ltd., Bombay 1946, Vol. I, p. 63.

32 *Bande Mataram*, Weekly Edition, "New Conditions," May 3, 1908.

33 *Bande Mataram*, April 14, 1908.

34 V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, *Life and Times of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta*, p. 73.

35 *Ibid*, p. 39.

36 Romesh Dutt, *The Economic History of British India, (Under Early British Rule)*, p. 430.

37 V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, *Life and Times of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta*, p. 22.

38 *New India*, June 26, 1902, pp. 696-698.

39 Aurobindo, *The Doctrine of Passive Resistance.*

40 Minto's Speech on Seditious Bill, November 2, 1907.

41 Aurobindo, *The Doctrine of Passive Resistance.*

42 *Ibid.*

43 *Bande Mataram*, Weekly Edition, "Bureaucracy and Nationalism," September 29, 1907.

44 Lajpat Rai, *Young India*, Servants of the People Society, Lahore, (1927), p. 197.

45 *Ibid*, p. 199.

46 The resolution ran: "This Congress records its earnest and emphatic protest against the repressive measures which have been adopted by the authorities in Bengal after the people there had been compelled to resort to the boycott of foreign goods as a last protest, and perhaps the only constitutional and effective means, left to them of drawing the attention of the British Public to the action of the Government of India in persisting in their determination to partition Bengal, in utter disregard of the universal prayers and protests of the people". (Annie Besant, *How India Wrought for Freedom*, p. 437).

47 In the Congress resolution, the words "Like that of the United Kingdom" were omitted. In their place the resolution stated that the Congress was of the opinion "that the system of Government obtaining in the self-governing British Colonies should be extended to India" and "as steps leading to it" urged certain reforms.—See B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. I, p. 54.

48 C. Y. Chintamani, *Indian Politics Since the Mutiny*, p. 57.

49 Sri Aurbindo *Sri Aurbindo on Himself and on the Mother*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry (1953), pp. 81-82.

50 Morley, *Indian Speeches*, p. 91.

51 Surendranath Banerjee, *A Nation in Making*, p. 283.

52 B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. I, p. 62.

53 Surendranath Banerjee, *A Nation in Making*, p. 208.

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55 Aurobindo, "The Wheat and the Chaff", *Bande Mataram*, April, 23, 1908.

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2 Quoted in *Status of Indian Princes*, by Pyarelal, Navajivan Press, Ahmedabad, (1941), p. 38.

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6 F. S. P. Lely to Amritlal Tulasidas Gandhi, dated Surat, September 22, 1890.

7 *Ibid*, Camp Madhavpur, March 29, 1888.

8 *Harijan*, February 3, 1940, p. 436.

CHAPTER VIII

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2 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, (1956), pp. 7-8.

3 *Harijan*, October 27, 1946, pp. 372-373.

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5 Joseph Doke, *M. K. Gandhi: An Indian Patriot in South Africa*, Akhil Bharat Serva Seva Sangh Prakashan, Varansi, (1956), p. 22.

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7 Gandhiji's Letter to Lord Wavell, dated March 9, 1944.

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1 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 15.
2 *Ibid*, p. 16.
3 *Ibid*, p. 26.
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8 *Ibid*, p. 22.

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12 *Walden and Other Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, The Modern Library, New York, (1937), p. 379.

13 *Ibid*, p. 384.

14 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 19.

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16 *Ibid.*

17 *Ibid*, p. 30.

18 *Ibid*, p. 29.

19 *Ibid*, p. 31.

20 G. A. Grierson in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* by James Hastings, Vol. X, pp. 150-151.

21 *Ibid.*

22 *Ibid.*

23 *Harijan*, "Weekly Letter," December 5, 1936, p. 339.

24 R. P. Masani, *Dadabhai Naoroji : The Grand Old Man of India*, p. 38.

25 *Ibid.*

26 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 34.

27 Joseph J. Doke, *M. K. Gandhi: An Indian Patriot in South Africa*, p. 31.

28 *Young India*, 4th March, 1926, p. 82.

29 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 34.

30 *Ibid.*

31 *Young India*, April 27, 1921, p. 135, Gandhiji while presiding at the Suppressed Classes Conference, Ahmedabad.

32 *Young India*, 4th May, 1921, p. 144.

33 *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, The Publications Division, Government of India, (1958), Vol. I, p. 4.

34 *Ibid*, p. 55.

35 *Ibid*, p. 5.

36 *Ibid.*

37 *Ibid*, pp. 5 and 56.

38 *Ibid*, p. 6.

39 *Ibid.*

40 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 38 and *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. I, p. 7.

41 *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. I, p. 7.

42 *Ibid*, p. 10.

43 *Ibid.*

44 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 39.

45 *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. I, p. 57.

46 *Ibid*, p. 58.

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47 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 41.

48 *The Vegetarian*, "Why He Went to England", 13-6-1891.

49 *Ibid.*

CHAPTER X

1 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 42.

2 M. K. Gandhi, "From the London Diary", quoted in the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. I, p. 13.

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Ibid*, p. 14.

5 *Ibid*, p. 15.

6 *Ibid*, p. 16.

7 *Ibid*, p. 17, (Italics mine).

8 *Ibid*, p. 19.

9 M. K. Gandhi, "Why He Went to England", *The Vegetarian*, London, June 20, 1891.

10 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 43.

11 *Ibid.*

12 Gandhiji in the journal of his voyage to England has said that he reached Southampton on Saturday the 28th of October, 1888. But October 28, 1888 fell not on Saturday but Sunday. In his *Autobiography* he has clearly stated that he arrived in Southampton on Saturday and that he could not expect to get his luggage even on the following day, it being Sunday. Since the entries in his journal were not contemporaneous, it must be taken that while he remembered the day of his arrival correctly, he got confused as to the date. (See "From the London Diary"—*Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. I, p. 3)

13 M. K. Gandhi, "From the London Diary", *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. I, p. 21.

14 H. W. Nevinson : *The English*, Chapter 5 "The Upper Class : The Professionals".

15 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 44.

16 *Ibid*, p. 45.

17 *Ibid*, p. 46.

18 *Ibid.*

19 George Stead Veitch : *Empire and Democracy* (1897-1913) T. C. & E. C. Jack, Edinburgh, p. 71.

20 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 49.

21 *Ibid*, p. 50.

22 *Ibid*, p. 52.

23 M. K. Gandhi's letter to Mr. Lely, dated December, 1888.

24 M. K. Gandhi's letter to Col. J. W. Watson, dated December, 1888.

25 M. K. Gandhi : *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 51.

26 *Ibid*, p. 54.

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CHAPTER XI

1 Edward Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, (1916), p. 217.

2 *Ibid*, p. 205.

3 D. L. Hobman, *Olive Schreiner*, Watts & Co., London, (1955), p. 82.

4 *Walden and Other Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, p. 266.

5 H. D. Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers*, The Walter Scott Publishing Co. Ltd., New York. (1889), p. 195.

6 *Walden and Other Writings of Henry David Thoreau* p. 190.

7 *Ibid*, p. 191.

8 *Ibid*, p. 194.

9 *Ibid*, p. 94.

10 H. D. Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers*, p. 122.

11 Roy Walker, "The Natural Life, An Essay on Thoreau", published in *The Vegetarian News*, London, Vol. XXVII, No. 259, Spring, 1948, p. 6.

12 Edward Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p. 208.

13 Henry S. Salt's letter to Gandhiji dated 2nd December, 1929.

14 Stephen Winsten, *Salt and His Circle*, Hutchinson & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., London, (1951), p. 32.

15 *Ibid*, p. 118.

16 M. K. Gandhi, "The Moral Basis of Vegetarianism", *Harijan*, February 20, 1949, p. 431.

17 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 59.

18 *Ibid*, p. 56.

19 *The Vegetarian Messenger*, May, 1891, p. 159.

20 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 58.

Gandhiji in his *Autobiography* (1956 Edition) says that the experiment of eating eggs lasted "not even a fortnight" (p. 56). But in his paper "The Foods of India", which he read in London on May 6, 1891, he stated : "I am sorry to say that I have been taking eggs for about a month and a half." The earlier statement, when his memory of the event was fresh, is likely to be more correct than what he wrote after a lapse of thirty-six years.

21 *Ibid*, p. 57.

22 M. K. Gandhi's address "The Moral Basis of Vegetarianism", before the London Vegetarian Society, on November, 20, 1931.

23 *Ibid.*

24 *Ibid.*

25 From the unpublished manuscript of M. K. Gandhi's *A Guide to London.*

26 *Ibid.*

27 *Ibid.*

28 *Ibid.*

29 *Ibid.*

30 Josiah Oldfield, "My Friend Gandhi", published in *Reminiscences of Gandhiji*,

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edited by Chandrashankar Shukla, Vora & Co. Publishers Ltd., Bombay, (1951), pp. 187-188.

31 From the unpublished manuscript of M. K. Gandhi's *A Guide to London.*

32 There is however a slim possibility that she might have been a step-daughter of Mrs Shelton.

33 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 66.

34 *Ibid.*

35 *Ibid*, p. 62.

36 *Encyclopaedia Britanica*, 1947.

37 Proceedings of the meeting of the Executive Committee of the London Vegetarian Society held on February 20, 1891.

38 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 60.

39 Ian Le Maistre, "Gandhi in London" *Envoy* dated July-August 1958.

40 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 77.

41 *Ibid*, p. 75.

42 Joseph J. Doke : *M. K. Gandhi : An Indian Patriot in South Africa*, p. 47.

43 M. K. Gandhi, *My Experiments with Truth*, p. 68.

44 In *Young India*, September 12, 1929, P. 302, Gandhiji wrote: "I have no evidence warranting a disbelief in the possibility of such communications. But I do strongly disapprove of the practice of holding or attempting to hold such communications. . . . The practice is harmful both to the medium and the spirits, assuming the possibility of such communications. . . .

As for the medium, it is a matter of positive knowledge with me that all those within my experience have been deranged or (rendered) weak-brained and (were) disabled for practical work whilst . . . they were holding such communications. I can recall no friend of mine who having held such communication had benefited in any way."

45 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 68.

46 Joseph J. Doke, *M. K. Gandhi : An Indian Patriot in South Africa*, p. 48.

47 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 69.

48 *Ibid.*

49 *Ibid*, p. 79.

50 Josiah Oldfield, "My Friend Gandhi" in *Reminiscences of Gandhiji*, p. 188.

51 M. K. Gandhi, "The Foods of India", published in *The Vegetarian Messenger*, June 1, 1891.

52 M. K. Gandhi, "Indian Vegetarians", published in *The Vegetarian* dated February 21, 1891.

53 *Ibid.*

54 M. K. Gandhi, "The Foods of India" published in *The Vegetarian Messenger*, June 1, 1891.

55 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 71

Gandhiji in his *Autobiography* places this incident in 1890. This is obviously a slip of memory on his part. He is perhaps mixing up this conference with an international Vegetarian Conference that was held in London in September of 1890.

56 Joseph Knight, "Vegetarianism Down South and Round About" published in *The Vegetarian Messenger*, June, 1891, pp. 205-206.

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57 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, pp. 71-72.

58 *Ibid*, p. 83.

59 *Ibid*, p. 61

An interesting theory has been advanced by Ian Le Maistre in the *Envoy* for July-August, 1958, to explain the phenomenon of Gandhiji's nervousness and what he calls his "lapses of memory" while recalling events relating to this period of his life in England. Referring to his accounts of his performance at the public meeting at Ventnor and at the Holborn Restaurant farewell function in his *Autobiography*, he writes: "He claims that at Ventnor he was so overcome with shyness that he was unable to read the speech and had to sit down. . . . Dr. Joseph Knight, the then Secretary of the Vegetarian Society (not of the L.V.S.) . . . wrote an account of his travels for *The Vegetarian Messenger* of Manchester. Referring to the Ventnor meeting he added that, 'Messrs Gandhi and Mazmudar also gave addresses'." As for the Holborn Restaurant function incident, "It will be seen . . . that Gandhi's memory of that (Holborn Restaurant) dinner bore no relation either to the content and length of his speech or to the number of times he spoke."

This according to Ian Le Maistre was due to the psychological trauma received by Gandhiji during his early days as a result of his extreme shyness which caused him intense suffering at that time:

"The emotional scar was still there when he had to concentrate on his life as a law student during the writing of his *Autobiography*. It became temporarily inflamed and the old nervous crises returned to his consciousness doubly distorted. He could remember only the discomfort, the gaucheries, the shyness. His mind refused to acknowledge the occasions on which he had triumphed over these difficulties."

A rigorous scrutiny, however, does not clearly establish any serious "lapse" or distortion of memory in the two instances cited by Ian Le Maistre. Joseph Knight's statement, "Messrs Mazmudar and Gandhi also delivered address", appears to be loosely worded. It does not necessarily mean that Gandhiji himself read his address. If an address prepared by Gandhiji for the occassion was read on his behalf it would be taken that Gandhiji 'gave' an address. The whole of Dr. Knight's article "Vegetarian Down South and Round About" is written in a rather flamboyant vein. A reference to nervous debacle in a speaker on vegetarianism was not likely to be included by him in his enthusiastic report.

At the Holborn function Gandhiji's opening remarks *were* a flop, as described by him, though towards the end he rallied. Gandhiji's impression of both these occasions as recorded by him is thus substantially correct.

The phenomenon of extreme shyness and nervousness is, however, a different matter. This, it would seem, resulted from unpleasant self-knowledge which Gandhiji was trying to banish from his conscious mind and which consequently went under cover in his sub-conscious mind. Whenever anything happened to bring it to the surface, a storm of nervousness followed. On the first occasion, it will be remembered, he had gone to Ventnor straight from the May meetings of the Vegetarian Federal Union at Portsmouth. As he stood up to read his paper, the memory of his shattering experience on the night of May 5, associated with the reading of his paper on the previous occasion, came surging back to his mind with the force of a tornado,

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leaving him dizzy and unnerved. At the Holborn Restaurant farewell function, again, the same familiar faces were before him as had confronted him at the Portsmouth gathering. This could have revived in his mind the memory of associated happenings with the same devastating effect.

The question may well be asked, why he did not suffer from dizziness at the Portsmouth gathering which came right after that incident on the night of the 5th? The answer is that at this time the monster had for the time being been beaten back to its lair. The feeling uppermost in the mind was one of triumph and elation. Time was needed for this feeling to wear off and for the foe to rally and renew its assault.

Gandhiji overcame his extreme shyness and nervousness only in South Africa as a result of a total personality change following the discovery on his part of his mission in life for which before that he had been vainly groping.

60 Josiah Oldfield, "My Friend Gandhi" in *The Reminiscences of Gandhiji*, p. 188.

61 Joseph J. Doke, *M. K. Gandhi: An Indian Patriot in South Africa*, p. 50.

62 M. K. Gandhi's interview with the representative of *The Vegetarian* on the eve of his departure for India, published under the title "Why He Went to England", in *The Vegetarian* dated June 20, 1891.

CHAPTER XII

1 M. K. Gandhi, "On My Way Home Again", *The Vegetarian*, dated April, 9, 1892.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*

4 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 87.

5 S. Radhakrishnan : *History of Philosophy Eastern and Western*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd. (London), Vol. I, pp. 140-141.

6 *Young India*, January 21, 1926, p. 30.

7 *The Cultural Heritage of India*, published by Shri Ramakrishna Centenary Committee, Calcutta, Vol. I, p. 230.

8 S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, (1929), Vol. I, p. 298. (c.f. Esoteric Christian Union's Doctrine, p. 321)

9 *Ibid.*

10 *Ibid.*

11 Speaking on Ahimsa in Jainism on the occasion of Shrimad Rajchandra's birthday anniversary at Ahmedabad in 1921, Gandhiji said :

"The Poet used to say that if Jaina religion had not fallen into the hands of *Shravaks* the profundity of its tenets would have filled the world with wonder. The Vaniyas have made a travesty of Jainism. They feed the ants and abjure potatoes. If by mischance they are led to eat potatoes they are filled with the anguish of remorse. . . . They can please themselves (if this gives them any satisfaction), but if they think that this is the whole essence of Jaina religion, then their conception of religion must prove them to be a degenerate rather than a spiritually enlightened people." (*Navajivan*, November 24, 1921).

12 "There are certain rules laid down in the Shastras for the would-be Brah-

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machari—the so-called nine-fold wall of protection. Thus he may not live among women, animals, and eunuchs; he may not teach a woman alone or even in a group, he may not sit on the same mat as a woman, he may not look at any part of a woman's body; he may not take milk, curds, *ghee* or any fatty substance or indulge in hot baths and oily massage." (Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, p. 570)

13 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 91.

14 M. K. Gandhi, "An Experiment in Vital Food", *The Vegetarian*, dated March 24, 1894.

15 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 96.

16 *Ibid*, p. 94.

17 *Ibid*, p. 98.

18 *Ibid*, p. 99.

19 Letters and Journals of James, Eighth Earl of Elgin (1872), p. 421; quoted by D. V. Gundappa in *The States and Their People in the Indian Constitution*, Karnataka Publishing House, Bangalore City (India), (1931), p. 52.

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1 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 104.

2 Sarah Gertrude Millin, *The People of South Africa*, p. 96.

3 Rolf Italiaander, *The New Leaders of Africa*, Prentice-Hall, International, London, (1961), p. 97.

4 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 105.

5 *Ibid*, p. 109.

6 *Ibid*, p. 112.

7 *Harijan*, December 10, 1938.

8 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 114.

9 *Ibid.*

10 *Ibid*, p. 122.

11 *Ibid*, p. 123.

12 *Ibid*, p. 125.

13 *Natal Advertiser*, November 14, 1893.

14 *Natal Mercury*, November 24, 1893.

CHAPTER XIV

1 *Natal Mercury*, October 26, 1895.

2 Albert Weir Baker, *Grace Triumphant*, pp. 85-86.

3 M. K. Gandhi, "An Experiment in Vital Food", *The Vegetarian*, London, March 24, 1894.

4 *Ibid.*

5 M. K. Gandhi, "To Indians in England", *The Vegetarian*, April 28, 1894.

6 Gandhiji's letter dated January 21, 1895, to the *Natal Advertiser*, February 1, 1895.

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7 M. K. Gandhi in a private letter from Pretoria, *The Vegetarian*, September 30, 1893.

8 M. K. Gandhi in a private letter from Pretoria, *The Vegetarian*, May 5, 1894.

9 Anna (Bonus) Kingsford and Edward Maitland, *The Perfect Way or The Finding of Christ*, John M. Watkins, London, 1923, Preface, p. xii.

10 *Ibid*, p. 44.

11 *Ibid*, pp. 61-62.

12 *Ibid*, p. 63.

13 *Ibid*, p. 65.

14 *Ibid*, p. 212.

15 *Ibid*, p. 225.

16 *Ibid*, p. 226.

17 *Ibid*, p. 249.

18 *Ibid*, Preface, p. vii.

19 *Ibid*, Preface, p. ix.

20 For instance, the raising from the dead—as of Lazarus— implied "resurrection from the condition of spiritual deadness"; the giving of sight implied "the opening of the spiritual vision"; and the feeding of the hungry multitude implied "The satisfaction of man's cravings for spiritual nourishment". (*Ibid*, p. 229).

21 *Ibid*, p. 221.

22 *Ibid*, p. 219.

23 *Ibid.*

24 *Ibid.*

25 *Ibid*, p. 224.

26 *Ibid*, pp. 223-224.

27 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 137.

28 Anna (Bonus) Kingsford and Edward Maitland, *The Perfect Way or the Finding of Christ*, p. 236.

29 Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi, The Last Phase*, Vol. I, p. 585.

30 The Christian religion in its pristine form, the founders of the E.C.U. declared, rested not on authority but upon inner experience: "We disclaim alike authority and dogma, we appeal to the *reason of humanity*" (*Perfect Way*, Preface, p. xix). Answering the objection that "there is an infinity of truth beyond the reach of human reason", Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland stated: "It is not that truth is not infinite but that reason, when perfected, is also infinite. . . . The doctrine of the incompetence of human reason to comprehend the 'truth' has ever been the stronghold of superstition, and worst enemy of . . . the faith that is based on the 'rock' of the understanding, the only faith that 'Saves'." (*Perfect Way*, Preface, p. xx).

31 Gandhiji's letter dated November 26, 1894, to the *Natal Mercury*, December 12, 1894.

32 Gandhiji's letter dated January 21, 1895, to the *Natal Advertiser*, February 1, 1895.

33 Gandhiji's letter dated November 26, 1894, to the *Natal Mercury*, December 12, 1894.

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34 Letters of Edward Maitland, dated August 4, 1891, to the *Pioneer Mail*, and August 28, 1891, to the *Table*.

35 *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Shri Ramakrishna Centenary Committee, Belur Math, Calcutta, Vol. II, p. 434.

36 Anna Kingsford and Maitland explained the difference between Occultism and Mysticism as follows:

Occultism implies transcendental physics, and belongs to the domain of science. Mysticism implies transcendental metaphysics, and belongs to the domain of religion. Or, to put it yet more plainly, Occultism deals with the religion which, being exterior to the soul, constitutes the soul's magnetic environment. And Mysticism deals with principles and processes which, being interior to the soul, determine its progress and state . . . while Theosophy, in its broader signification, represents and includes the entire range of Transcendentalism, the science of the Mystic strictly and singly *spiritual*. (*Perfect Way*, Preface, p. xvii).

37 Gandhiji's letter to Mrs Lewis, dated August 4, 1894.

38 *Mahatma Gandhi and Shrimad Rajchandra* (in Gujarati) published by Bhogilal Nagindas, Unjha Pharmacy Ltd., Unjha, (Gujarat), (*Samvat* 2005), p. 33.

39 *Ibid*, pp. 18-21.

40 *Ibid*.

CHAPTER XV

1 Jan H. Hofmeyr, *South Africa*, Ernest Benn Limited, London, (1952), p. 39.

2 Sarah Gertrude Millin, *Rhodes*, Chatto and Windus, London, (1933), p. 49.

3 Jan H. Hofmeyr, *South Africa*, p. 47.

4 Leo Marquard, *The Story of South Africa*, Faber and Faber Limited, London, (1956), p. 70.

5 *Ibid*.

6 *Ibid*, p. 98.

7 Sarah Gertrude Millin, *The People of South Africa*, p. 11.

8 Alan Paton, *Hope for South Africa*, Pall Mall Press, London, (1958), p. 23.

9 *Ibid*, p. 22.

10 *Ibid*, p. 27.

11 Leo Marquard, *The Story of South Africa*, p. 125.

12 Sarah Gertrude Millin, *The People of South Africa*, p. 28, and E. A. Ritter, *Shaka Zulu, The Rise of the Zulu Empire*, Longmans Green and Co., London, p. 313.

13 Sarah Gertrude Millin, *The People of South Africa*, p. 27.

14 B. L. W. Brett, B. A., *Makers of South Africa*, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., London, pp. 23-24.

15 Sarah Gertrude Millin, *The People of South Africa*, p. 29.

16 *Ibid*, p. 261.

17 Sarah Gertrude Millin, *South Africa*, William Collins of London, (1941), p. 15.

18 *Ibid*, p. 16.

19 Leo Marquard, *The Story of South Africa*, p. 128.

20 John Clark Ridpath LL.D. and Edward S. Ellis, A. M., *The Story of South*

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Africa, William Watson and Co., London, (1899), p. 211.

21 Henry Gibbs, *Background to Bitterness*, Frederick Muller Ltd., London, (1954), p. 83.

22 *Ibid*, p. 84.

23 Sarah Gertrude Millin, *The People of South Africa*, p. 35.

24 F. Addington Symonds, *The Johannesburg Story*, Frederick Muller Ltd., London, (1953), p. 12.

25 *Ibid*, p. 102.

26 Felix Gross, *Rhodes of Africa*, Cassell & Company Ltd., London, (1956), p. 25.

27 *Ibid*, p. 36.

28 Ruskin's inaugural address delivered on February 8, 1870, as Slade Professor at Oxford. *The Works of Ruskin*, George Allan, London, (Library Edition), (1905), pp. 41-42.

29 *Ibid.*

30 *Ibid*, p. 62.

31 Quoted by Sir Lewis Mitchell, C. V. O. in *The Life and Times of The Right Honourable Cecil John Rhodes*, Edward Arnold, London, (1912), p. 39.

32 Sarah Gertrude Millin, *The People of South Africa*, p. 56.

33 Sarah Gertrude Millin, *Rhodes*, p. 14.

34 J. R. Seeley M. A., *The Expansion of England*, p. 15.

35 Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, (1776), Bk. IV, Chapter VII.

36 Parker Thomas Moon, Ph.D., *Imperialism and World Politics*, The Macmillan Company, New York, (1929), p. 17.

37 Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, Bk. IV, Chapter VII.

38 Vladimir Halperin, *Lord Milner and The Empire*, p. 28.

39 *Ibid*, pp. 28-29.

40 Sarah Gertrude Millin, *Rhodes*, p. 170.

41 Monypenny and Buckle, *Life of Disraeli*, Vol. III, p. 385.

42 *Ibid*, p. 476.

43 Zimmerman, *Geschichte der deutschen Kolonialpolitik* (Berlin, 1904), p. 6, quoted in *Imperialism and World Politics*, p. 23, by Parker Thomas Moon.

44 In France the output of coal had increased from 5.1 thousand tons in 1847 to 12.73 thousand tons in 1867; pig iron from 5.9 to 12.6 quintals; steam engines from 4.8 to 23.4 (thousand); and exports of manufacture from .69 to 1.53 million francs. In the United Kingdom and Germany the production of pig iron between 1870 and 1903 rose from 5.9 million tons to 8.9 million tons and from 1.39 million tons to 9.86 million tons respectively. Between 1851 and 1869 general commerce in France had increased by 206 per cent. The volume of German trade between 1870 and 1903 rose from £16 billion to £19 billion—almost catching up with the volume of British trade which then stood at £25 billion.

Even more startling was the growth of population and of the surplus investment of capital abroad. About 1870 the French capital, invested abroad was 10 billion francs as against Britain's 15 billion francs. The German investment was negligible. But by 1914 the French investments abroad had gone up to 60 billion francs, the British to about 75 billion francs and the German to 44 billion francs. The population,

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during this period of Britain rose from 33 to 42 million, of Germany from 41 to 60 million and of France from 36 to 40 million. (L.C.A. Knowles, *Economic Development in the 19th Century*, p. 146, quoted by K. Nurul Hasan in *The Scramble for Africa (1875-1914)*, *Africa Quarterly*, July, Sept. 1961, p. 14).

45 Parker Thomas Moon, Ph.D., *Imperialism and World Politics*, p. 64.

46 Pamphlet issued by the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, 1884, quoted by Parker Thomas Moon, Ph.D. in *Imperialism and World Politics*, p. 66.

47 Sarah Gertrude Millin, *Rhodes*, p. 171.

48 *Ibid*, p. 43.

49 Felix Gross, *Rhodes of Africa*, p. 101.

50 Sarah Gertrude Millin, *Rhodes*, p. 64, (Italics mine).

51 Sir Lewis Michell, C. V. O., *The Life and Times of the Right Honourable Cecil John Rhodes*, p. 134.

52 Lobengula suspecting a trap refused to enter into any treaty. When Moffat pressed, he told him point-blank not to try to be too clever. But Moffat urged that at least for politeness' sake he should write a letter to the Great White Queen, stating his reasons for his refusal. He, thereupon, signed a sheet of paper which was placed before him, firmly convinced that he was signing a letter merely expressing his regrets that he was unable to enter into a treaty with the Queen's Government. The document which Moffat delivered to his delighted masters at Cape Town bearing Lobengula's great elephant seal, practically robbed his country of its sovereignty for ever. Its concluding portion read:

". . . It is further agreed by Lobengula, chief in and over the Amandebele country with its dependencies aforesaid, on behalf of himself and people, that he will refrain from entering into any correspondence or treaty with any foreign State or Power, to sell, alienate or cede, or permit, or countenance any sale, alienation, or cession of the whole or part of the said Amandebele country under his chieftainship, or upon any other subject without the previous knowledge and sanction of Her Majesty's High Commissioner for South Africa. . . ." (See *The Life and Times of the Right Honourable Cecil John Rhodes* by Sir Lewis Michell, C. V. O., p. 134).

53 Henry Gibbs, *Background to Bitterness*, p. 141.

54 Felix Gross, *Rhodes of Africa*, p. 153.

55 *Ibid*, p. 154.

56 *Ibid*, p. 153.

57 Henry Gibbs, *Background to Bitterness*, p. 32, and Leo Marquard, *The Story of South Africa*, p. 153.

58 Felix Gross, *Rhodes of Africa*, p. 157.

59 *Ibid*, pp. 165-66.

60 Basil Williams, *Cecil Rhodes*, Constable and Company Ltd., London, (1921), p. 134.

61 Sarah Gertrude Millin, *Rhodes*, p. 117.

62 Parker Thomas Moon, Ph.D., *Imperialism and World Politics*, p. 170.

63 Lieut-Colonel Frank Johnson, D.S.O., *Great Days*, G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., London, (1940), p. 106.

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64 Felix Gross, *Rhodes of Africa*, p. 236.

The servants of the British South African Company were not the ones to let themselves be troubled by moral scruples any more than their masters. Later, two European troopers to whom Lobengula had entrusted a sum of money as a token of his earnestness to surrender after his country was overrun by Rhodes' troops, embezzled the money and kept back his message. Their dastardly conduct was afterwards discovered and they were sentenced to penal servitude, but the arch criminals were always able to keep the law at bay. (See *Cecil Rhodes*, by Basil Williams, p. 178).

65 This is how John Xavier Merriman, some time Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, summed up this sorry chapter shortly afterwards:

"Some individual went north and got a paper signed by a miserable chief, who was probably half drunk when he signed it. The man went to England, sold the concession to dukes, lords, and princes, who formed the Chartered Company. The next thing they heard was that the chief was a dangerous vagabond, and then the resources of civilisation were put in force against him. At present this country was being worked by two great companies—the De Beers Company and the Chartered Company. The people in this country, notwithstanding its riches, were poor. . . ." (*Natal Mercury*, February 2, 1895).

66 Felix Gross, *Rhodes of Africa*, p. 240.

67 Sarah Gertrude Millin, *Rhodes*, p. 96.

68 Sarah Gertrude Millin, *The People of South Africa*, p. 62.

69 Felix Gross, *Rhodes of Africa*, p. 235.

70 *Ibid*, p. 329.

71 *Ibid*, p. 332.

72 Sarah Gertrude Millin, *Rhodes*, p. 314.

73 *Ibid*, p. 103.

74 *Ibid*, p. 199.

75 Felix Gross, *Rhodes of Africa*, p. 242.

76 *Ibid*, p. 217.

77 F. Addington Symond, *The Johannesburg Story*, p. 92.

78 John Clark Ridpath, LL.D. and Edward S. Ellis A. M., *The Story of South Africa*, p. 210.

79 Felix Gross, *Rhodes of Africa*, p. 102.

80 H. C. Armstrong, *Grey Steel*, Methuen and Co. Ltd., London, (1951), p. 22.

81 H. C. Armstrong, *Grey Steel*, p. 23.

82 *Ibid*, p. 22.

83 *Ibid*, p. 23.

84 Quoted in Felix Gross, *Rhodes of Africa*, p. 134.

85 Sarah Gertrude Millin, *Rhodes*, p. 251.

86 F. Addington Symonds, *The Johannesburg Story*, p. 110.

87 Eric A. Walker, *A History of Southern Africa*, Longmans Green & Co., London, (1957), p. 445.

88 Initially, Lord Ripon was very strongly opposed to such a course. Early in September 1894 he had reported to his Prime Minister Rosebery as follows:

"We might make war on the Boers . . . or we might play off the British

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element . . . against the Boer element and give the Boer Government thereby a lot of trouble. To go to war with the Boers . . . I hold to be out of the question. It would be very costly, it would require a large force. . . .

"To press our complaints against the Transvaal on account of their treatment of British subjects and support the latter in their claims would be a course having in it more elements of ultimate success than may at first appear, but would be, no doubt, uncertain in its effects and would be represented as mean and cowardly . . . for which last I for one should not care."

But under the pressure of the German threat, it seems he persuaded himself or was persuaded to drop his objection. (See *Rhodes of Africa*, by Felix Gross, p. 300).

89 Felix Gross, *Rhodes of Africa*, p. 299.

90 Eric A. Walker, *A History of Southern Africa*, p. 450.

91 *Ibid.*

92 *Ibid.*

93 *Ibid*, p. 448.

94 H. C. Armstrong, *Grey Steel*, p. 31.

95 F. Addington Symonds, *The Johannesburg Story*, p. 122.

96 A. Conan Doyle, *The Great Boer War*, Smith, Elder & Co., London, (1900), p. 8.

97 Felix Gross, *Rhodes of Africa*, p. 323.

98 *Ibid*, p. 318.

99 Leo Marquard, *The Story of South Africa*, p. 204.

100 Felix Gross, *Rhodes of Africa*, p. 352.

101 *Ibid*, p. 355.

102 H. C. Armstrong, *Grey Steel*, p. 38.

103 The Rt. Hon. J. C. Smuts, M.A., LL.D. D.C.L., Gandhiji's Political Method, in *Mahatma Gandhi*, edited by S. Radhakrishnan, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, (1949), p. 282.

104 E. A. Ritter, *Shaka Zulu—The Rise of the Zulu Empire*, pp. 7-8.

105 John Gunther, *Inside Africa*, Hamish Hamilton, London, (1955), p. 287.

106 E. A. Ritter, *Shaka Zulu—The Rise of the Zulu Empire*, pp. 8-9. (Italics mine).

107 Henry Gibbs, *Background to Bitterness*, p. 32.

108 Sarah Gertrude Millin, *Rhodes*, p. 122.

109 Sarah Gertrude Millin, *South Africa*, William Collins of London, (1941), p. 16.

110 Sarah Gertrude Millin, *The People of South Africa*, p. 29.

111 Felix Gross, *Rhodes of Africa*, p. 147.

112 Sarah Gertrude Millin, *The People of South Africa*, p. 268.

113 *Ibid*, p. 269.

114 *Ibid*, p. 58.

115 *Ibid*, p. 59.

116 *Ibid.*

117 Raojibhai Manibhai Patel, *Gandhijini Sadhana*, (in Gujarati), Navajivan Prakashan Mandir, Ahmedabad, (1939), p. 9.

118 Sarah Gertrude Millin, *The People of South Africa*, p. 264.

119 *Ibid*, p. 253.

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120 *Ibid*, p. 252.

121 M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, (1961), p. 9.

122 *Ibid.*

123 *Ibid*, pp. 11-12.

124 Sarah Gertrude Millin, *The People of South Africa*, p. 252.

125 *Young India*, March 28, 1929.

CHAPTER XVI

1 Sarah Gertrude Millin, *The People of South Africa*, p. 251.

2 Sarah Gertrude Millin, *The South Africans*, Constable & Co., Ltd., London, (1927), p. 196.

3 Jan H. Hofmeyr, *South Africa*, p. 146.

4 *Ibid.*

5 N. Gangulee, *Indians in the Empire Overseas*, The New India Publishing House Limited, London, (1947), p. 21.

6 *Ibid*, p. 22.

7 *Ibid*, p. 28.

8 *Ibid.*

9 Sir John Robinson, *A Life Time in South Africa*, Smith, Elder & Co., London, (1900), p. 73.

10 *Ibid*, p. 75.

11 M. K. Gandhi, *The Grievances of the British Indians in South Africa*, Rajkot, August 14, 1896.

12 M. K. Gandhi, Open Letter to Hon. Members of the Hon. the Legislative Council and the Hon. the Legislative Assembly, December, 1894.

13 *Ibid*, p. 276.

14 *Ibid.*

The figures of Natal population in 1893 in the second paragraph below have been taken from the annexure dated 1-2-1894, of the Memorandum submitted by the Binns-Mason Delegation of the Government of Natal to the Government of India on January 20, 1894. (National Archives of India in the Government of India, Revenue & Agriculture Deptt. file 18 of 1894.)

15 N. Gangulee, *Indians in the Empire Overseas*, p. 48.

16 The Indian petition to Lord Ripon in May 1895.

17 M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, p. 33.

This incident was reported in the *Natal Mercury* on November 21, 1896, as follows:

"When a deputation of influential Indian merchants interviewed President Kruger with reference to grievances under the law which enacts their removal to locations, his Honour asked whether they believed in Abraham. On being hastily answered in the affirmative, our G.O.M. replied naively (records the *Press*) that he was pleased to hear it, and the deputation would perhaps remember that Abraham had ordered his own son, Ishmael, to live outside his camp. 'You must see that the Volksraad has placed me in the position of Abraham, and you will have to obey the law, and live

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outside as Ishmael did'. It is reported that those Indian merchants regret keenly having so fondly believed in Abraham that sunny afternoon on Oom Paul's verandah."

18 The *Press*, April 5, 1895.

In the original draft the expression used was "the subjects of Her Majesty". But when this article was cabled to London, Lord Kimberley, in his message of July 1881 instructed Sir Hercules Robinson, the Governor of the Cape and British High Commissioner, to insert instead "all other than natives".

19 The Dutch equivalent which was then used by the Transvaal representatives, was *inboorlingen*, a word understood to mean "the coloured aborigines of the Transvaal".

20 In his letter of Lord Derby, Sir Hercules Robinson wrote:

"*I should be disposed to recommend that the Government of the South African Republic be informed that Her Majesty's Government will be willing to amend Article 14 of the Convention by inserting the words African natives or, Indian or Chinese coolie immigrants.* The article would then read, 'All persons other than African natives or Indian or Chinese coolie immigrants conforming themselves to the Laws of the South African Republic will have full liberty with their families to enter, travel or inhabit, etc." (Italics mine). The *Press*, April 5, 1895.

21 C.D. 2239, Correspondence relating to the position of British Indians in the Transvaal, as presented to both Houses of the British Parliament in August, 1904, Letter No. 4, p. 38.

22 Lord Derby in a letter to Sir Hercules Robinson dated, March 19, 1885, wrote:

"I have carefully considered your suggestion to the amendment of the Convention, and if you are of opinion that it would be preferable and more satisfactory to the Government of South African Republic to proceed as you propose, *Her Majesty's Government will be willing to amend the Convention as suggested.* It seems to deserve consideration, however, whether it would be more correct for the Volksraad to legislate in the proposed sense, having received an assurance that Her Majesty's Government will not desire to insist upon any such construction of the term of the Convention as would interfere with reasonable legislation in the desired direction". The *Press*, April 5, 1895.

23 C.D. 2239 correspondence relating to the position of British Indians in the Transvaal, as presented to both Houses of the British Parliament in August 1894, Letter No. 4, p. 39.

24 The *Press*, April 5, 1895.

25 Jan H. Hofmeyr, *South Africa*, p. 147.

26 *Ibid.*

27 N. Gangulee, *Indians in the Empire Overseas*, p. 46.

28 *Natal Advertiser*, September 15, 1893.

29 Quoted by *Natal Advertiser*, October 10, 1893.

30 *Natal Advertiser*, September 15, 1893.

31 *Ibid*, September 27, 1893.

32 *Ibid*, September 28, 1893.

33 *Ibid.*

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34 *Ibid*, September 15, 1893.

35 *Moon*, June 10, 1893.

36 *Natal Advertiser*, September 15, 1893.

37 *Ibid.*

38 Gandhiji's letter dated September 19, 1893 to the Editor, *Natal Advertiser*, September 23, 1893.

39 Indian address welcoming the arrival of the new Governor of Natal on September 28, 1893, —*Natal Mercury*, September 30, 1893.

40 *Natal Mercury*, September 30, 1893.

41 *Ibid*, June 28, 1894.

42 Government of India, Calcutta Records, 2, File No. 18 of 1894, Department of Revenue and Agriculture.

43 *Ibid.*

44 *Ibid.* (Italics mine).

45 *Ibid.* For quotations on pages 405 and 406, see the Government of India records referred to under Reference No. 42 above.

46 N. Gangulee, *Indians in the Empire Overseas*, p. 46.

47 C. Y. Chintamani, *Indian Politics Since the Mutiny*, p. 28.

48 Government of India, Calcutta Records, 2, File No. 18 of 1894, Department of Revenue and Agriculture.

49 *Ibid.*

50 *Natal Mercury*, April 18, 1894.

51 *Ibid*, June 22, 1894.

52 *Ibid*, October 18, 1893.

53 *E. P. Herald*, quoted by *Natal Mercury*, dated October 11, 1893.

54 *Ibid.*

55 M. K. Gandhi, *The Grievances of the British Indians in South Africa*, Rajkot, August 14, 1896.

56 *Natal Mercury*, June 22, 1894 (Italics mine).

57 *Ibid.*

58 *Natal Witness*, June 29, 1894.

59 *P. E. Telegraph*, November 14, 1893.

60 *E. P. Herald*, quoted by *Natal Advertiser* dated November 8, 1893.

CHAPTER XVII

1 *Natal Mercury*, June 25, 1894.

In the First Report of the Natal Indian Congress Gandhiji wrote in August 1895 that "during the month of July 1894 the Natal Government introduced a Bill called the Franchise Law Amendment Bill in the Legislative Assembly". This is clearly a slip. The Bill was introduced sometime in June, it was noticed editorially in the *Natal Mercury* of June 25, 1894, and passed through the Committee stage before the month was over. (*Natal Mercury*, June 28, 1894). Gandhiji rarely committed any factual error in recalling events. But the text of the Congress Reports (August 1895) in Gandhiji's Sabarmati Archives, which is the only text available

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to us, being only a cyclostyled draft, it is possible that it might have been amended before printing or/and circulation.

2 *Natal Mercury*, July 9, 1894.

3 *Ibid*, June 29, 1894

4 *Ibid.*

5 Indian petition to the Natal Assembly, June 28, 1894. Colonial Office Records, No. 179, Vol. 189: Votes and Proceedings of Parliament, Natal; 1894. (*Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. I, p. 95)

6 *Ibid*, p. 96.

7 Indian petition to His Excellency the Right Honourable Marquis of Ripon, July 17, 1894.

Colonial Office Records, No. 179, Vol. 189. (*Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. I, p. 117)

8 Indian Deputation to Natal Governor, July 3, 1894. Despatch No. 62 of 16th July 1894 from the Governor of Natal, Sir Walter Hely-Hutchinson to Lord Ripon, Secretary of State for the Colonies, Text of Enclosure 2. (*Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. I, p. 103)

9 Indian petition to the Legislative Council of Natal, July 4, 1894. (*Natal Advertiser*, July 5, 1894)

10 Second Indian petition to the Legislative Council of Natal, July 6, 1894. Colonial Office Records No. 181, Vol. 38 (*Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. I, pp. 108-110).

11 Indian petition to His Excellency the Right Honourable Marquis of Ripon, July 17, 1894. Colonial Office Records No. 179, Vol. 189. (*Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. I p. 118)

12 *Natal Witness*, June 28, 1894.

13 *Ibid.*

14 *Natal Advertiser*, June 29, 1894.

15 *Natal Mercury*, July 6, 1894.

16 *Ibid*, July 12, 1894.

17 *Star*, quoted by *Natal Mercury*, dated July 7, 1894, (Italics mine.)

18 Gandhiji's letter dated July 7, 1894 to the Editor *Natal Mercury* July 11, 1894.

19 *Natal Mercury*, July 12, 1894.

20 *Times of Natal*, October 22, 1894.

21 Gandhiji's letter dated October 25, 1894 to the Editor, *Times of Natal*, October 26, 1894.

22 *Times of Natal*, October 21, 1894.

23 Sir William Wedderburn, Bart., *Allen Octavian Hume, C. B.* p. 84.

24 *Ibid*, pp. 85-86.

25 R. P. Masani, *Dadabhai Naoroji: The Grand Old Man of India*, George Allan and Unwin Ltd., London, (1939), pp. 306-307.

26 *Ibid*, pp. 468-469.

27 *Times of India*, August 27, 1894.

28 Gandhiji's letter to Dadabhai Naoroji, July 27, 1894. (Gandhi Nidhi Photostat No. 2252.)

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CHAPTER XVIII

1 M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, p. 46.

2 In his *Autobiography*, Gandhiji has stated that the Natal Indian Congress came into being on the 22nd May. This date is obviously wrong. According to its First Report, the Congress was "formally established on the 22nd August".

It has to be remembered that Gandhiji was recalling the event after about thirty years, and an error like this is quite possible.

3 Describing his own experience of travelling along these roads during the 1882 election, Sir John Robinson wrote in his memoir:

"A furnace-like hot wind blew during the first two stages of this journey, and the horses of my trap knocked up in the depths of the magnificently precipitous Umkomas Valley, and I had to walk all the way to Ixopo, twenty miles off, in the face of a fiery blast. Two nights later the open two-wheeled postcart started with us hours before dawn, scrambling and crawling along a misty mountain track, whose dangers were mercifully hidden from sight by the darkness and the sleet."— Sir John Robinson, *A Life Time In South Africa*, Smith, Elder and Co., London, (1900), p. 170.

4 *Natal Advertiser*, June 12, 1895.

5 *Natal Witness*, May 20, 1896.

6 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 198.

7 *Ibid*, p. 151.

8 First Report of the Natal Indian Congress.

9 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 151.

10 M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, p. 48.

11 *Ibid*, p. 47.

12 *Natal Mercury*, September 6, 1894.

13 *Ibid*, September 5, 1894.

14 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 147.

15 *Ibid*, p. 148.

16 *Natal Mercury*, September 6, 1894.

17 *Star*, September 5, 1894.

18 *Natal Witness*, September 5, 1894.

19 *Ibid*, September 18, 1894.

20 *Natal Advertiser*, September 20, 1894.

21 *Ibid*, March 22, 1895.

22 *Ibid*, March 23, 1895.

23 Gandhiji's letter dated March 23, 1895, to the *Natal Witness*, March 28, 1895.

24 *Ibid*.

25 *Natal Mercury*, April 10, 1895.

26 *Natal Advertiser*, February 22, 1898.

27 *Natal Mercury*, January 29, 1895.

28 *Ibid*, April 13, 1895.

29 *Natal Advertiser*, February 6, 1896.

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30 *Natal Mercury*, January 29, 1896.
31 Gandhiji's letter dated March 2, 1896 to the *Natal Mercury*, March 6, 1896.
32 *Natal Advertiser*, January 29, 1896.
33 *Natal Mercury*, February 28, 1896.
34 *Ibid*, February 21, 1896.
35 *Natal Advertiser*, January 29, 1896.
36 Gandhiji's letter dated March 2, 1896 to the *Natal Mercury*, March 6, 1896.
37 *Ibid.*
38 *Ibid.*; Dr. Booth was Minister of St. Aidan's Church, Durban.
39 Gandhiji's letter dated March 2, 1896 to the *Natal Mercury*, March 6, 1896.
40 *Natal Advertiser*, March 7, 1896.
41 Gandhiji's letter dated March 2, 1896 to the *Natal Mercury*, March 6, 1896.
42 *Natal Witness*, March 6, 1896.
43 *Natal Advertiser*, March 7, 1896.
44 *Natal Witness*, March 27, 1896.
45 *Ibid.*
46 *Ibid.*
47 *Ibid*, April 17, 1896.
48 *Natal Advertiser*, June 2, 1896.
49 *India*, September, 1894, pp. 265-266.
50 *Natal Advertiser*, October 6, 1894.
51 *Natal Witness*, September 13, 1894.
52 *Natal Witness*, September 13, and September 21, 1894.
53 *Ibid*, September 13, 1894.
54 *Ibid.*
55 *Ibid.*
56 *Natal Advertiser*, October 14, 1894.
57 *Ibid.*
58 *Ibid.*
59 *St. James' Budget* quoted by *Natal Advertiser*, October 14, 1894.
60 *Natal Mercury*, January 11, 1895.
61 *Ibid.*
62 *Ibid*, February 4, 1895.
63 *Natal Advertiser*, May 20, 1895.
64 *Ibid*, April 29, 1895.
65 *Ibid.*
66 *Cape Times*, October 24, 1895.
67 *South Africa Times*, November 7, 1895.
68 Gandhiji's "Open Letter" to the Honourable Members of the Legislative Council and the Honourable the Legislative Assembly of Natal, dated December 1894, (circulated on December 19, 1894).
69 *Ibid.* For all quotations between Ref. Nos. 68 and 69 see the "Open Letter".
70 That the intellectual rennaisance referred to by Gandhiji had not exhausted itself was shown by the fact recorded by Sir W. W. Hunter that as late as 1877,

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1192 works on religion and 56 on mental and moral philosophy had been published in the Indian languages. In 1882, their number had risen to 1545 and 133 respectively. The number of medical works published in the languages of India during the corresponding period was 130 and 212 respectively besides 87 on natural sciences in the latter period.

71 Gandhiji's "Open Letter", to the Honourable Members of the Honourable the Legislative Council and the Honourable the Legislative Assembly of Natal, dated December, 1894 (circulated on December 19, 1894).

72 *Natal Witness*, January 24, 1896.

73 Gandhiji's "Open Letter" to the Hon'ble the Legislative Council and the Hon'ble the Legislative Assembly of Natal dated December, 1894 (circulated on December 19, 1894) along with a covering letter. (All the quotations following the reference preceding it are from the "Open Letter".)

74 *Natal Witness*, December 29, 1894.

75 *Natal Advertiser*, December 13, 1894.

76 *Natal Witness*, November 14, 1894.

77 *Natal Advertiser*, October 18, 1895.

78 *Ibid*, March 7, 1895.

79 *Natal Mercury*, January 10, 1895.

80 *Inkanyiso*, January 19, 1895.

81 *Natal Advertiser*, January 1, 1895.

82 *Natal Mercury*, January 7, 1895.

83 *Ibid*, August 31, 1895.

84 Gandhiji's letter dated September 2, 1895 to the *Natal Mercury*, dated September 5, 1895.

85 *Natal Mercury*, March 21, 1896.

86 *Cape Times*, May 11, 1889.

87 *Star*, December 26, 1894. (Italics mine).

88 *Critic*, January 11, 1895.

89 *Ibid.*

90 *Cape Times*, January 24, 1895.

91 *Ibid.*

92 Gandhiji's letter to the Honourable the Colonial Secretary, Pietermaritzburg, dated October 21, 1895; the Colonial Office Records, No. 179, Vol. 192.

93 *Natal Advertiser*, September 16, 1895.

94 *Ibid.*

95 *Natal Mercury*, September 23, 1895.

96 *Natal Advertiser*, September 21, 1895.

97 *Ibid.*

98 *Natal Witness*, September 24, 1895.

99 *Ibid.*

100 Gandhiji's letter dated September 23, 1895 to the *Natal Advertiser*, . . . September, 1895.

101 *Natal Advertiser*, September 26, 1895.

102 *Natal Mercury*, September 28, 1895.

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103 *Natal Mercury*, September 28, 1895.

104 *Cape Argus*, quoted by *Natal Witness*, October 11, 1895.

105 *Natal Mercury*, September 28, 1895.

106 One wonders whether the gentleman signing himself as 'H' could be R. H. Tatham. Colour is lent to this surmise by the fact that Tatham used exactly the same argument in almost identical language to set the Hindus and Muslims by the ears in his interview to *The Times* quoted on pp. 560-561. It is, however, possible that 'H' was an Indian and Tatham was only repeating what his informant had briefed him with. Such things did sometimes happen in India, as for instance, when during the "Quit India" struggle Sir Richard Tottenham used in his indictment of Gandhiji and the Congress, (*Congress Responsibility for the Disturbances, 1942*) exactly the same argument and even the expressions used publicly by Dr. N. B. Khare and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, members of the Viceroy's Executive Council.

107 Gandhiji's letter dated September 25, 1895 to the *Natal Mercury*, September 27, 1895.

108 Gandhiji's letter dated September 30, 1895 to the *Natal Mercury*, October 4, 1895.

109 *Natal Advertiser*, October 3, 1895. (Italics mine).

110 *Ibid*, October 5, 1895.

111 *Ibid*, October 8, 1895.

112 Gandhiji's letter dated October 9, 1895, to the *Natal Advertiser*, October 10, 1895.

113 *Natal Witness*, October 5, 1895.

114 *South Africa Telegraph*, October 7, 1895 (Italics mine).

115 *Natal Mercury*, October 6, 1895.

116 *Ibid.*

117 *Ibid*, October 25, 1895.

118 Gandhiji's letter dated October 21, 1895 to the Honourable the Colonial Secretary, Pietermaritzburg.

119 *Natal Mercury*, October 23, 1895, "The Stone Throwing Case", (Italics mine).

120 *Ibid*, November 28, 1895, "Magisterial Irregularities".

121 *Natal Witness*, October 18, 1895.

122 *Ibid.*

The reference was to an Indian telegram that had appeared in *The Times* in May 1894 about the smearing of trees in the forests of Behar and Central India "with plaster and hair". It had led Colonel Malleson and the *Spectator* to recall the portent of mysterious *chupatties* that had ushered in the Great Rising of 1857. A theory was propounded by the *Spectator* that the wide and deep economic distress caused by the closing of the mints and demonetisation of silver, and the enhancement in land tax which "Government was trying silently to raise by increased assessments in order to meet the losses caused by the failure of the rupee", (See p. 134) had created, especially in the Punjab, an atmosphere of sulky discontent which was favourable to such rising. As for the means of prevention there were none "except to garrison Allahabad more carefully, as the key of India, to see

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that armed vessels command the Presidency town . . . and to call back any troops who may be encamped beyond the Himalayas or in Burmah". These precautions, however, the journal went on to say, were hardly likely to be taken. "The only thing certain is that Asia is not and never will be favourable to European domination and that Asia has hitherto throughout her long history succeeded in spitting Europeans out". The echoes of this had reached South Africa. True, British soldiers had never known defeat, wrote the *Press* but were they really "as much superior to Sikhs and Goorkhas and Rajpoots, as Richard's mail-clad warriors were to the cavalry of Saladin?" it asked, and concluded with the observation that "it was Saladin, nevertheless, who stopped in Jerusalem". (The *Press*, "The Indian Scare", 28-5-94).

123 *Cape Times* reproduced in the *Natal Witness*, dated October 18, 1895. (Italics mine).

124 *Ibid.*

CHAPTER XIX

1 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 155.

2 *Natal Advertiser*, May 20, 1895.

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Ibid.*

5 *Ibid*, May 22, 1895.

6 *Ibid*, May 20, 1895.

7 *Ibid*, May 22, 1895.

8 General Manager's Letter No. G.M. 2440/1895, dated July 1, 1895 Sabarmati Sangrahalaya Photostat No. 41-43.

9 See Appendix L.

10 *Ibid.*

11 *Natal Mercury*, September 16, 1896.

12 Henry S. L. Polak: *The Indians of South Africa, Helots Within the Empire and How They Are Treated*, G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras, (1909), p. 28.

13 *Natal Mercury*, May 9, 1895.

14 Henry S. L. Polak: *The Indians of South Africa, Helots Within the Empire and How They Are Treated*, p. 45.

15 *Natal Advertiser*, December 13, 1894.

16 Henry S. L. Polak, *The Indians of South Africa, Helots Within the Empire and How They Are Treated*, p. 45.

17 *Natal Mercury*, January 28, 1895.

18 *Natal Advertiser*, May 3, 1895.

19 *Natal Mercury*, June 17, 1895.

20 *Ibid*, June 13, 1895 (Italics mine).

21 India Office Despatch No. 72 (public) dated August 2, 1894, Department of Revenue and Agriculture, Government of India, File No. 18 of 1894—Calcutta Records, 2. (Italics mine).

22 *Ibid.*

23 *Natal Mercury*, November 15, 1894.

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24 *Natal Advertiser*, February 22, 1895.
25 *Natal Mercury*, December 14, 1894.
26 *Natal Witness*, September 13, 1894.
27 *Ibid*, January 18, 1895.
28 *Natal Advertiser*, February 2, 1895.
29 *Natal Mercury*, February 14, 1894.
30 *Natal Witness*, April 12, 1895.
31 *Ibid.* (Italics mine).
32 *Ibid.*
33 Petition to Natal Legislative Assembly by Abdulla Haji Adam and several others published in the *Natal Advertiser* on May 5, 1895.
34 *Natal Mercury*, May 9, 1895 (Italics mine).
35 *Ibid.*
36 *Natal Advertiser*, May 9, 1895.
37 *Capital* quoted in the *Natal Advertiser* of June 19, 1895.
38 *Natal Advertiser*, May 10, 1895. (Italics mine).
39 *Ibid*, May 16, 1895. (Italics mine).
40 *Natal Mercury*, September 24, 1894.
41 *Ibid*, May 21, 1895.
42 Department of Revenue and Agriculture, Government of India, Calcutta Records, No. 2, File No. 18, of 1894 (Noting p. 9).
43 *Natal Mercury*, May 9, 1895, (Italics mine).
44 Petition to the Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain dated August 11, 1895, by the Indian community.
45 *Ibid.* (Italics mine).
46 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 157.
I have failed to trace documents pertaining to this in the National Archives of India or even in the British Museum. They might be available in the Government Archives at Pretoria or Pietermaritzburg, if at all.
47 Petition to the Natal Legislative Council by Abdulla Haji Adam and several other Indians on behalf of the Indian community published in the *Natal Mercury* on June 26, 1895.
48 Petition to the Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain dated August 11, 1895, by the Indian community.
49 *Ibid.*
50 *Ibid.*
51 *Ibid.*
52 *Ibid.*
53 *Ibid.*
54 Memorial to His Excellency the Right Honourable Lord Elgin, Viceroy and Governor-General of India, dated August 11, 1895, by Abdul Karim Hajee Adam and others representing the Indian community in Natal.
55 Government of India Simla Records, File No. 34 of 1895, Department of Revenue and Agriculture, Prog. No. 5 & 6, Emigration, August.
56 Quoted by Gandhiji in his address in Madras on October 26, 1896, under

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the auspices of the Mahajan Sabha.

57 *Ibid.*

58 Governor-General of India's despatch to the Secretary of State, No. 5, dated, Calcutta January 22, 1896.

59 *Natal Mercury*, July 7, 1894.

60 M. K. Gandhi, *The Grievances of the British Indians in South Africa* (*An Appeal to the Indian Public*), published from Rajkot on August 14, 1896.

61 *Natal Mercury*, September 19, 1896.

62 *Ibid.*

63 *Natal Witness*, September 2, 1896.

64 *Natal Mercury*, November 12, 1896.

65 *Ibid.*

66 *Ibid.*

67 *Natal Advertiser*, September 4, 1896.

68 *Ibid*, October 7, 1896.

69 *Ibid.*

70 *Ibid*, March 30, 1895.

71 The claims of the respective parties as laid before the arbitrator were as follows: Her Majesty's Government claimed (a) that the Indian and other Asiatic traders, being British subjects, be allowed to reside in the towns of the South African Republic in some quarters (wards and streets) which for sanitary purposes may be assigned to them. (b) That they be allowed to carry on their trade or business in shops or stores in any part of the town. The Government of the South African Republic claimed (a) that the South African Republic was fully entitled to make such regulations concerning "coolies, Arabs, Malays, and Mahomedan subjects of the Turkish Empire" as it might think fit. (b) That Her Majesty's Government was not entitled to object when the Government of the South African Republic prohibited "coolies, Arabs, Malays, and Mahomedan subjects of the Turkish Empire", from having business premises in villages and towns on places other than those assigned by the Government.

[Transvaal Blue Book No. CD. 2239 (In continuation of CD 1684), p. 39, published in August 1904: Correspondence, relating to position of British Indians in the Transvaal, No. 4 by Lyttelton to Viscount Milner dated July 20, 1904.]

72 *Natal Mercury*, December 12, 1895.

73 *Natal Advertiser*, April 11, 1895, (Italics mine).

74 Memorial to Sir Jacobus de Wet, K. C. M. G., Her Majesty's Agent, Pretoria, dated April 16, 1895, by Tayab Hajee Khan Mohamed, Abdool Gani and Hajee Habib Hajee Dada.

Enclosure in Despatch No. 204 of April 29, 1895, from H. M.'s High Commissioner to the South African Republic to the Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies (Colonial Office Records No. 417, Vol. 148).

75 Petition to His Excellency the Right Honourable the Marquis of Ripon, Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies, by the British Indians residing in the South African Republic some time in May 1895.

76 The reference to the Arbitrator in the case submitted on behalf of Her

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Majesty's Government ran:

"The Arbitrator shall be free to decide either in favour of the claims put forward by Her Majesty's Government or by the South African Republic, or to lay down such interpretation of the said ordinances, read together with the Despatches referring to the question as shall appear to him to be correct."

For quotations between Ref. Nos. 76 and 77 refer to the source mentioned in Ref. No. 75.

77 Gandhiji's letter to Kamruddin on May 5, 1895.

78 Kamruddin's letter (Gujarati) to Gandhiji on May 8, 1895, Sabarmati Sangrahalaya Photostat No. 39.

79 Appendix E of the Petition to His Excellency the Right Honourable the Marquis of Ripon, Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies, by the British Indians residing in the South African Republic some time in May 1895.

80 Petition to His Excellency the Right Honourable the Marquis of Ripon, Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies, by the British Indians residing in the South African Republic, sometime in May, 1895. (*Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. I, P. 203)

81 *Natal Mercury*, July 24, 1898.

82 *Cape Times*, April 13, 1889.

83 *Ibid.*

84 Even Gandhiji seems to have been under the impression that W. C. Bonnerjee was a Christian. Manicklal Mukherjee, however, in his *W. C. Bonnerjee*, Deshbandhu Book Depot, Calcutta, (1944), on p. 36, writes:

"It is really a matter of surprise that most of our countrymen, even those among them, who hold high positions and offices in the Indian National Congress know him to be a Christian. Perhaps, they are not to blame for this, as some of his sons and daughters embraced Christianity, and even his wife became a convert to that faith, just a short time before his death. But our countrymen should know that *Mr Bonnerjee lived a Hindu and died a Hindu.*"

Hardeoram N. Haridas was secretary of the Surat District Congress Committee.

85 *India*, October 1895, pp. 301-304.

86 *Ibid.*

87 *Natal Advertiser*, December 11, 1895.

88 Cd 2239 (In continuation of Cd 1684).

Correspondence relating to the position of British Indians in the Transvaal Letter No. 4 by Mr. Lyttelton to Viscount Milner dated July 20, 1904. See Transvaal Blue Book, p. 38, published in August 1904.

89 *Ibid.*

90 M. K. Gandhi, *Notes on the Grievances of the British Indians in South Africa*, Rajkot, September 22, 1896.

91 Memorial to the Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain, Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies by the Indian community in Natal, dated March 11, 1896.

92 *Natal Mercury*, February 29, 1896.

93 Gandhiji's letter dated March 4, 1896, to Mr. C. Walsh, Acting Secre-

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tary for Zululand. (Colonial Office Records, No. 427, Vol. 24).

94 Gandhiji's letter to Dadabhai Naoroji, dated March 7, 1896.

95 Memorial to the Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain, Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies, dated March 11, 1896, by the Indian community in Natal.

96 *Natal Advertiser*, May 1, 1895.

97 *India*, May, 1896, Supplement, p. 28.

98 Memorial to Joseph Chamberlain by the British Indian subjects residing in the South African Republic, dated November 26, 1895.

99 H. O. Arnold Forster's letter addressed to the Secretary, British Indian Defence Committee, Johannesburg, on October 23, 1895. (Sabarmati Sangrahalaya Photostat No. 98).

100 Memorial to Joseph Chamberlain by the British Indian subjects, residing in the South African Republic, dated November 26, 1895.

101 *India*, January, 1896, p. 6.

102 Gandhiji's address in Bombay on September 26, 1896.

103 *India*, March, 1896, Supplement, p. 4.

104 M. K. Gandhi, "A Band of Vegetarian Missionaries", *The Vegetarian*, May 18, 1895.

105 *Ibid.*

106 *Ibid.*

107 *Ibid.*

108 *Harijan*, August 24, 1934, p. 218.

109 M. K. Gandhi : "A Band of Vegetarian Missionaries", *The Vegetarian*, May 18, 1895.

110 M. K. Gandhi, "Vegetarianism in Natal", *The Vegetarian*, December 21, 1895.

111 Gandhiji's letter dated February 3, 1896, to the Editor, the *Natal Mercury*, February 4, 1896.

112 *Ibid.*

113 *Ibid.*

114 *Natal Mercury*, December 19, 1894.

CHAPTER XX

1 *Natal Witness*, January 18, 1895.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Ibid.*

5 *Ibid.*

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid.*

8 *Natal Advertiser*, February 6, 1895.

9 *Natal Mercury*, February 7, 1895

10 *Ibid*, February 8, 1895.

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11 *Natal Advertiser*, February 9, 1895.
12 *Ibid*, February 19, 1895.
13 *Natal Mercury*, February 19, 1895.
14 *Natal Witness*, February 2, 1895.
15 *Ibid.*
16 *Natal Advertiser*, February 28, 1895.
17 *Ibid*, March, 15, 1895.
18 *Ibid*, April 27, 1895.
19 *Ibid.*
20 *Ibid*, July 11, 1895.
21 *Ibid.*
22 *Ibid*, July 17, 1895.
23 *Ibid.*
24 *Natal Witness*, July 26, 1895.
25 *Ibid*, September 27, 1895.
26 *India*, October, 1895, p. 303.
27 *Natal Witness*, October 4, 1895.
28 *The Times*, quoted by a Natal paper; see photostat copy of Gandhiji's scrap book No. III, P. i, S. No. 526 from Gandhi National Memorial Trust, New Delhi.
29 *Natal Witness*, August 13, 1895.
30 *Star*, August 31, 1895.
31 *Ibid.*
32 *Natal Mercury*, August 31, 1895.
33 *Ibid*, September 3, 1895.
34 *Ibid*, September 6, 1895.
35 *Express*, September 3, 1895.
36 *Natal Advertiser*, September 3, 1895.
37 *South African Times*, October 7, 1895.
38 *Natal Witness*, September 6, 1895 (Italics mine).
39 *Ibid.*
40 Gandhiji's letter to the Editor, *Natal Mercury*, September 5, 1895.
41 *Ibid.*
42 *Natal Mercury*, September 10, 1895.
43 *The Times*, quoted by Gandhiji in his letter dated September 15, 1895, to the Editor, *Natal Mercury*, September 23, 1895.
44 *Inkanyiso*, September 6, 1895.
45 *Natal Witness*, September 6, 1895.
46 *Natal Mercury*, September 13, 1895.
47 *Natal Witness*, September 20, 1895.
48 *Times of Natal*, October 8, 1895.
49 *Natal Advertiser*, September 5, 1895.
50 *Natal Mercury*, September 13, 1895.
51 *Ibid*, September 16, 1895.
52 *Natal Witness*, September 20, 1895.
53 *Natal Mercury*, September 5, 1895.

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54 *Ibid*, September 26, 1895.

55 *Natal Advertiser*, September 25, 1895.

56 *Natal Witness*, September 27, 1895.

57 *South Africa*, quoted by *Natal Mercury*, October 20, 1895.

58 *Natal Mercury*, October 7, 1895.

59 *Star*, October 16, 1895.

60 *Natal Witness*, on October 11, 1896 wrote:

"We would rather not see that time-honoured article of British furniture brought out in connection with the matter which is of not less concern to the Dutch section of the population than the British. . . . We laugh at the patriotism of President Kruger and his burghers, but they have as much right to laugh at any of us when we rest a case of mutual concern upon national prestige. . . . We are all, Dutch and English equally, looking forward to the time when this country also will be a very large unit but that day will not be until men have ceased to talk of the prestige of one or another race. We are all alike trying to fuse our several states into one great unit. . . . We can all, Germans and other nationalities as well as English and Dutch, treasure up and retain the memory of the prestige of our respective countries . . . without flaunting it in the face of others."

61 *Natal Witness*, October 11, 1896.

62 As an illustration of the high level of culture of the Indian element settled in South Africa a columnist of *South Africa* on October 26, 1895, had this:

"The other day I saw a waiter at his club hastily put a book down that he was reading. As he went away to answer a bell, I took up the book and found it was the *Gemara* of the *Talmud* in the original, and I afterwards ascertained that he could also read the English newspapers. To some extent the man was more learned than I am, and yet by many superficially minded people, he would be called and classed as a "coolie". Hence I admit that there are misconceptions to be removed from the minds of those who live in England on this subject."

63 *South Africa*, October 26, 1895.

64 *Natal Advertiser*, October 12, 1895.

65 *Natal Mercury*, October 15, 1895.

66 *Ibid*, November 2, 1895.

67 *Natal Advertiser*, November 5, 1895.

68 *Natal Mercury*, November 4, 1895.

69 *Natal Advertiser*, November 4, 1895.

70 *Ibid.*

71 *Ibid.*

72 *Ibid.*

73 *Ibid*, November 14, 1895.

74 *Natal Witness*, November 15, 1895.

This trait of Bhownaggree had been noted in India also and had rendered him thoroughly odious even to some of the leading members of his own party. Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri, a leading liberal in his lectures on "*Life and Times of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta*" describing his conduct on this and on similar occasions delivered himself as follows :

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"About this time Bhownaggree became a member of the House of Commons for Bethnal Green. It was when he was a member in the Tory interest, that he was furious in his attack upon all the public men in India and denounced them as unpatriotic, ... He . . . always praised the officials and held non-officials to scorn. Mehta was very, very angry with him especially so because he was a Parsi and a disgrace to his community. Once . . . Pherozeshah Mehta made a rather remarkable speech holding him up to contempt . . . and gave vent to his sarcasm as Pherozeshah could and nobody esle."

Sastriar then went on to quote from Sir Pherozeshah Mehta's remarks:

"A certain class of Anglo-Indians have decorated Mr Bhownaggree with a little gold lace, and he is set up as a great political oracle of 'credit and renown' (loud laughter) and he has been made oracularly to denounce the educated classes as sowing discontent and sedition by their perpetual and selfish and unscrupulous attacks against the English in India. (Renewed laughter). Gentlemen, I for one recognise the singular competence of Mr Bhownaggree to formulate such an indictment, for I have a very vivid recollection of an incident that took place some years ago."

After describing the Parsi Knight's discomfiture at the hands of an Anglo-Indian fellow-traveller during a railway journey already recorded in these pages (See p. 760, Reference No, 6), Sir Pherozeshah concluded with withering irony:

"This friend of mine, the hero of the story, was, gentlemen, no other than Mr Bhownaggree (loud laughter and cheers), who has now recanted the errors of his old ways and is posing as a reformed character before Anglo-Indian audiences to denounce the folly and danger of allowing the educated classes to make perpetual attacks on and criticise European in India, who if they have faults, have them only as the sun has spots." (Laughter).

75 *Natal Mercury*, November 19, 1895.

76 *Ibid*, (Italics mine).

77 *Ibid*, November 27, 1895.

78 *Ibid* (Italics mine).

79 *Ibid.*

80 *Ibid.*

81 *Natal Witness*, November 28, 1895.

82 *Natal Advertiser*, Dec. 2, 1895.

83 Sir John Robinson, *A Life Time in South Africa*, Smith, Elder and Co. London, (1900), p. 222.

84 *Ibid*, p. 233.

85 *Times of Natal*, November 27, 1895.

86 *Ibid.*

87 *Ibid.*

88 *Natal Advertiser*, November 30, 1895.

89 *Natal Mercury*, December 4, 1895.

90 *Ibid*, April 29, 1896.

91 *Natal Advertiser*, April 22, 1896. (For the two quotations preceding this, please see Ref. No. 90).

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92 *Natal Witness*, quoted by *Natal Mercury*, December 3, 1895.
93 *Ibid.*
94 *Natal Advertiser*, December 4, 1895.
95 *Ibid*, December 12, 1895.
96 *Natal Witness*, December 6, 1895.
97 *Ibid*, December 13, 1895.
98 *Ibid*, December 6, 1895.
99 *Ibid*, December 13, 1895.
100 *Ibid.*
101 *Natal Mercury*, December 27, 1895.
102 *Natal Witness*, December 13, 1895.
103 *Ibid.*
104 *Ibid*, December 7, 1895.
105 *Ibid*, January 17, 1896.
106 M. K. Gandhi, *An Appeal to Every Briton in South Africa*, December 16, 1895. From a pamphlet printed by T. L. Cullingworth, Printer, 40, Field Street, Durban, 1895.
107 Describing the valour and devotion of the Indian soldiers on the battle-field W. W. Hunter wrote in *The Times:*

"One Sepoy who received the Order of Merit has had no fewer than thirty-one wounds, 'probably', says the *Indian Daily News*, 'a record number'. Another, shot in the defile where Rose's party was cut up, quietly felt out the bullet in his body and with both hands forced it, fearless of the agony, to the surface. When at last he could get it between his fingers he pulled it out, and then, streaming with blood, he shouldered his rifle again and did a march of twenty-one miles. . . .

"Two water carriers of the 4th Bengal Infantry were singled out in the dispatches 'for the gallantry and devotion exhibited by them during the action at Koragh'. Indeed, nothing could exceed their magnificent self-devotion to their comrades in that deadly pass. Another man of the same regiment was mentioned for the 'conspicuous gallantry and devotion exhibited while with the party which brought the late Captain Baird into Chitral fort. . . . The truth is that the Indians are earning the right to be regarded as worthy fellow-subjects in more ways than one" (Sir William Wilson Hunter, quoted in Gandhiji's "An Appeal to Every Briton".

108 M. K. Gandhi, *An Appeal to Every Briton in South Africa.*
109 *Ibid.*
110 *Ibid.*
111 *Ibid.*
112 The section of the Franchise Law dealing with the qualification for the voting right read:

"Every man except as hereafter excepted, above the age of twenty-one years, who possesses an immovable property to the value of £50 or who rents any such property of the yearly value of £10 within any electoral district and who is duly registered in the manner hereinafter mentioned, shall be entitled to vote at the election of a member for such district. When any such property

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as aforesaid is occupied by more persons than one as proprietors or renters, each of such occupants, being duly registered, shall be entitled to vote in respect of such property, provided the value, or as the case may be, the rent thereof be such as would entitle each of such joint occupants to vote if equally divided among them."

113 M. K. Gandhi, *An Appeal to Every Briton in South Africa.*

114 *Ibid.*

115 Mr Saunders, though a zealous advocate of anti-Asiatic policy, had in a statement in a Blue Book, from which Gandhiji quoted said :

"The mere definition that these signatures must be in full and in the elector's own handwriting and written in European characters would go a long way to check the extreme risk of the Asiatic mind swamping the English. (Affairs of Natal, C-3796, 1883)."

Speaking about the indentured Indian, Captain Graves had expressed the opinion that the Indians who had "abandoned all claim for themselves and their families to a free return passage were justly entitled to the Franchise."

Sir Michael Galaway had in his report, that appeared in the same Blue Book, observed: "It will be noticed that the measure drafted by me contains certain clauses which have been adopted from recommendations of the Select Committee, providing for the carrying out of the alternative plan mentioned in Mr Saunder's letter, while the proposal for the specific disqualification of aliens has not been considered advisable of adoption."

116 M. K. Gandhi, *An Appeal to Every Briton in South Africa.*

117 *Natal Mercury*, December 12,1895.

118 *Bechuanaland News*, February 8, 1896.

119 *Pilgrim*, April 1895.

120 *Ibid.*

121 *Ibid.*

122 *The Times*, January 27, 1896.

123 *Ibid.* (Italics Mine).

124 *Ibid.* (Italics Mine)

125 *Natal Witness*, February 28, 1896.

126 *Ibid.*

127 *Ibid*, January 10, 1896.

128 *Ibid*, February, 28, 1896.

129 *Ibid*, January 17, 1896.

130 *Ibid*, February 21, 1896.

131 *Ibid.* (Italics mine).

132 *Ibid.* (Italics mine).

133 *Ibid.*

CHAPTER XXI

1 *Natal Witness*, April 3, 1896.

2 *Ibid*, March 6, 1896.

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3 Lord Lansdowne, quoted by *Natal Witness*, March 6, 1896.
4 *Natal Witness*, April 3, 1896.
5 *Ibid.*
6 *Ibid.*
7 *Ibid*, March 6, 1896.
8 *Ibid*, April 3, 1896.
9 *Ibid.*
10 *Times of Natal*, March 3, 1896.
11 *Ibid.*
12 *Natal Advertiser*, March 3, 1896.
13 *Ibid.*
14 *Ibid*, March 7, 1986.
15 *Ibid.*
16 *Ibid*, March, 28, 1896.
17 *Ibid.*
18 *Natal Witness*, March 13, 1896.
19 Gandhiji's letter to Sir William Wedderburn dated March 7, 1896. From a photostat of the handwritten original.
20 *Natal Mercury*, March 5, 1896.
21 *Ibid.* (Italics mine).
22 *Ibid.*
23 *Ibid*, April 23, 1896.
24 Gandhiji's letter dated April 4, 1896 to the Editor, *Natal Witness*, April 17, 1896.
25 *Ibid.*
26 *Natal Witness*, March 6, 1896.
27 *Ibid*, April 17, 1896.
Joey B's seems to be a misprint for Joey R's (Sir John Robinson).
28 *Ibid*, April 10, 1896.
29 *Natal Advertiser*, April 24, 1896.
30 *Ibid*, April 23, 1896.
31 *Natal Mercury*, April 23, 1896.
32 *Natal Advertiser*, April 24, 1896.
33 *Ibid.*
34 Indian memorial to the Natal Assembly dated April 27, 1896.
From a photostat of a printed copy.
35 *Natal Advertiser*, September 30, 1896.
36 *Natal Mercury*, April 29, 1896. (Also see *Natal Witness*, May 1, 1896).
37 *Ibid.*
38 *Natal Witness*, May 1, 1896

The *Natal Witness* had as a fact ample justification for its surmise and its suspicion, that the Ministry were trying to hide from the public some adverse communication by Lord Ripon. This is brought out by what appears in a memorial addressed to the Government of India, that was submitted by the British India Association, Bengal. In it the memorialists quoted the following from a

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special despatch by Lord Ripon when he was in the Colonial Office :

"It is the desire of Her Majesty's Government that the Queen's Indian subjects should be treated upon footing of equality with all Her Majesty's other subjects." (Government of India Records File No. 14 of 1897, Prog. 8-20, Emigration, Revenue and Agriculture Department, November).

39 *Ibid.*
40 *Ibid.*
41 *Ibid,* May 8, 1896.
42 *Ibid,* May 11, 1896.
43 *Natal Advertiser,* May 8, 1896.
44 *Natal Witness,* May 8, 1896.
45 *Natal Mercury,* May 7, 1896.
46 Natal Indian Memorial to Joseph Chamberlain dated May 22, 1896. From a photostat of printed copy (Italics mine).
47 *Natal Witness,* May 7, 1896.
48 *Ibid.*
49 *Natal Mercury,* May 7, 1896.
50 *Natal Witness,* May 8, 1896.
51 *Natal Mercury,* May 14, 1896.
52 *Natal Advertiser,* May 14, 1896.
53 *Ibid.*
54 *Natal Mercury,* May 14, 1896.
55 *Ibid.*
56 Natal Indian Memorial to Joseph Chamberlain dated May 22, 1896.
57 *Natal Advertiser,* May 15, 1896.
58 From a copy in the Sabarmati Sangrahalaya Photostat copy No. 984.
59 Sabarmati Sangrahalaya Photostat copy No. 132.
60 From a copy in the Sabarmati Sangrahalaya.
61 *Natal Adveriser,* May 23, 1896.
62 *Ibid,* May 8, 1896.
63 *Ibid.*
64 *Natal Witness,* May 15, 1896.
65 *Ibid,* May 22, 1896.
66 *Natal Advertiser,* May 19, 1896. (Italics mine).
67 *Ibid.*
68 *Ibid* (Italics mine).
69 *Ibid.*
70 *Natal Witness,* May 15, 1896.
71 *Natal Advertiser,* April 24, 1896.
72 *Ibid,* January 1, 1895.
73 *Ibid,* May 15, 1896.
74 Gandhiji's letter dated April 13, 1897 to the Editor, *Natal Mercury,* April 16, 1897.
75 Sabarmati Sangrahalaya Photostat No. 111-12.
76 Sabarmati Sangrahalaya Photostat No. 114.

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77 Natal Indian Memorial to Joseph Chamberlain dated may 22, 1896.

78 *Ibid.*

79 *Ibid.* (Italics mine).

80 *Ibid.*

81 *Ibid.*

82 *Ibid.*

83 *Ibid.*

84 *Ibid.*

85 *Ibid.*

86 *Ibid.*

87 Sabarmati Sanghrahalaya Photostat. No. 160.

88 *Natal Mercury*, August, 14 1896.

89 M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, (1961), p. 88.

CHAPTER XXII

1 Ernest J. Simmons: *Leo Tolstoy*, John Lehmann, London (1949), p. 35.

2 *Ibid*, p. 36.

3 *Ibid*, p. 135.

4 Count Lev N. Tolstoy, *Latest Works. Life General Index Bibliography*, translated by Leo Wiener, Dana Estes & Company, Boston (U. S. A.), (1905), p. 240.

5 *Ibid*, p. 238.

6 *Ibid*, p. 239.

"So long as there is any desire to know and speak the truth, you try to know and speak. . . . This alone will I do, but only not in the form of your art. *Art is a lie and I can no longer love a beautiful lie*" (Italics mine).

7 *Ibid.*

8 Ernest J. Simmons, *Leo Tolstoy*, p. 365.

9 Leo Tolstoy, *What Then Must We Do?*, translated by Aylmer Maude, Oxford University Press, London, (1960), p. 14.

10 Count Lev N. Tolstoy, *What Shall We Do Then?*, translated by Leo Wiener, J. M. Dent & Co., London (1886), p. 15.

11 *Ibid*, pp. 96-97.

12 *Ibid*, p. 98.

13 *Ibid*, p. 92.

13 *Ibid*, p. 92.

14 *Ibid*, p. 171.

15 Tikhon Polner, *Tolstoy and His Wife*, translated by Nicholas Wreden, Jonathan Cape, London, (1946), p. 145.

16 Count Lev N. Tolstoy, *What Shall We Do Then?*, translated by Leo Wiener, p. 124 and p. 164 (Italics mine).

17 Tikhon Polner, *Tolstoy and His Wife*, p. 146.

18 Ernest J. Simmons, *Leo Tolstoy*, p. 400.

19 Count Lev N. Tolstoy, *What Shall We Do Then?*, translated by Leo Wiener, p. 349.

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20 Leo Tolstoy, *What Then Must We Do?*, translated by A. Maude, p. 268.

21 *Ibid.*

22 Count Lev N. Tolstoy, *What Shall We Do Then?*, translated by Leo Wiener, p. 275.

23 Leo Tolstoy, *What Then Must We Do?*, translated by A. Maude, p. 282.

24 Count Lev N. Tolstoy, *What Shall We Do Then?*, translated by Leo Wiener, p. 296.

25 Leo Tolstoy, *Essays and Letters*, translated by A. Maude, Oxford University Press, London, (1925), pp. 11-12.

26 Leo Tolstoy, *What Then Must We Do?* translated by A. Maude, p. 288.

27 Count Lev N. Tolstoy, *What Shall We Do Then?*, translated by Leo Wiener, p. 274.

28 *Ibid*, p. 279.

29 *Ibid*, p. 285.

30 *Ibid*,

31 *Ibid.*

32 *Ibid*, p. 286.

33 *Ibid.*

34 Count Lev N. Tolstoy, *Latest Works*, p. 298.

35 Count Lev N. Tolstoy, *What Shall We Do Then?*, translated by Leo Wiener, pp. 291-292.

36 *Ibid*, p. 294.

37 *Ibid*, p. 298.

38 Leo Tolstoy, *Essays and Letters*, p. 125.

39 *Ibid*, pp. 126-127.

40 Count Lev N. Tolstoy, *What Shall We Do Then?*, translated by Leo Wiener, p. 301.

41 *Ibid.*

42 *Ibid*, p. 317.

43 *Ibid*, pp. 317-318.

44 *Ibid*, p. 325.

45 *Ibid.*

46 *Ibid*, p. 323.

47 *Ibid.*

"From external conditions such a man will never be in want, because men, seeing his desire to work, as in the water-power to which a mill is attached, will always try to make his labour most productive, and to have it as productive as possible, they will make his material existence secure, which they do not do for men who strive after possessions. But the security of material conditions is all a man needs.

"For internal conditions such a man will always be happier than he who seeks possessions, because the latter will never obtain what he is striving after, while the first will always get it in accordance with his strength: the feeble, the old, the dying, as the proverb says, with a crowbar in their hands, will receive full satisfaction and the love and sympathy of men"—Count Lev N. Tolstoy, *What Shall We do Then?*, p. 323.

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48 Count Lev N. Tolstoy, *What Shall We Do Then?*, translated by Leo Wiener, pp. 314-315.

49 *Ibid*, p. 316.

50 *Ibid*, pp. 326-327.

51 Tikhon Polner, *Tolstoy and His Wife*, p. 158.

52 Ernest J. Simmons, *Leo Tolstoy*, p. 425.

53 *Ibid.*

54 Leo Tolstoy, *What Then Must We Do?*, translated by A. Maude, p. 390.

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57 *Ibid*, p. 359.

58 *Ibid*, p. 354.

59 *Ibid*, p. 357.

60 Ernest J. Simmons, *Leo Tolstoy*, p. 492.

61 Alexandra Tolstoy, *Tolstoy*, translated by Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood, Victor Gollancz Ltd., London, (1953), p. 229.

62 Tikhon Polner: *Tolstoy and His Wife*, pp. 137-138.

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64 *Ibid*, p. 137.

65 Diary of Countess Sophia A. Tolstoy.

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68 *Ibid*, p. 140.

69 *Ibid*, p. 174.

70 Alexandra Tolstoy, *Tolstoy*, p. 516.

71 From a paper read by Riccardo Bacchelli at the Tolstoy Seminar at Venice (June 29 — July 3, 1960) organised by the Cini Foundation to commemorate the fiftieth death anniversary of Leo Tolstoy.

72 Ernest J. Simmons, *Leo Tolstoy*, p. 838.

73 Alexandra Tolstoy, *Tolstoy*, p. 520.

74 Ernest J. Simmons, *Leo Tolstoy*, p. 625.

75 Alexandra Tolstoy, *Tolstoy*, p. 525 and also Leo Tolstoy, *What Then Must We Do?*, translated by A. Maude, Editor's Note, p. XI.

76 Tolstoy, quoted by Dr. Kalidas Nag, in *Tolstoy and Gandhi*, Pustak Bhandar, Patna, (1950), p. 32.

77 Count Lev N. Tolstoy, *The Four Gospels Harmonized and Translated*, translated by Leo Wiener, J. M. Dent & Co., London, (1904), Vol. I, p. 11.

78 *Ibid.*

79 *Ibid*, p. 12 (Italics mine).

80 Leo Tolstoy, *Essays and Letters*, p. 301.

81 *Ibid*, p. 304.

82 *Ibid*, p. 306.

83 *Ibid.*

84 *Ibid*, p. 307.

85 Count Lev N. Tolstoy, *The Four Gospels Harmonized And Translated*, p. 15.

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86 Count Lev N. Tolstoy, *The Four Gospels Harmonized And Translated*, p. 15.

87 For instance, in Matthew 5, 22 the words "without cause" had been introduced between "whosoever is angry with his brother" and "shall be in danger of the judgment" that were nowhere to be found in the original Greek text. The Commandment about divorce in Matt. 5, 32 had been translated as follows:

"Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."

This failed to make sense even grammatically. Literally rendered this verse read:

"He who puts away his wife, besides the sin of dissoluteness, causes her to commit adultery. And he who marries a divorced woman also commits adultery."

The meaning, comments Tolstoy, is clear. Christ by this Commandment condemns the practice of divorce sanctioned under the old Jewish law by saying that a husband, by casting off his wife and taking another, besides being himself guilty of dissoluteness "is also guilty of this, that by abandoning her he causes both her and him with whom she comes together to commit adultery".

88 Leo Tolstoy, *What Then Must We Do?*, translated by A. Maude, p. 385: in "A letter to M. A. Engelhardt."

89 Leo Tolstoy, *A Confession, The Gospel in Brief, and What I Believe*, translated by A. Maude, Oxford University Press, London, (1958), p. 523.

90 Leo Tolstoy, *Essays and Letters*, p. 184.

91 *Ibid.*

92 *Ibid.*

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94 *Ibid*, p. 186.

95 *Ibid*, p. 181.

96 *Ibid*, p. 329.

97 Count Leo Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, translated by A. Delano, Walter Scott Ltd. London, (1894), p. 91.

98 Leo Tolstoy, *Essays and Letters*, p. 328.

99 Count Lev N. Tolstoy, *Miscellaneous Letters and Essays*, translated by Leo Wiener, Dana Estes & Company, Boston, (1905), pp. 510-511.

100 Leo Tolstoy, *A Confession, The Gospel in Brief, and What I Believe*, Introduction, p. XV.

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103 Tolstoy, quoted by Dr. Kalidas Nag in *Tolstoy and Gandhi*, p. 18.

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106 *Ibid*, p. 537.

107 Leo Tolstoy, *Essays and Letters*, p. 82.

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109 *Ibid*, p. 14.

110 *Ibid*, p. 78.

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112 *Ibid*, p. 70.

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114 *Ibid*, p. 510.
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116 *Ibid*, p. 104.
117 Tikhon Polner, *Tolstoy and His Wife*, p. 148.
118 *Ibid*, p. 135.
119 *Ibid*, p. 133.
120 Ernest J. Simmons, *Leo Tolstoy*, p. 431.
121 Tikhon Polner, *Tolstoy and His Wife*, p. 177.
122 *Ibid*, p. 178. (Italics mine).
123 Alexandra Tolstoy, *Tolstoy*, p. 478.
124 Tikhon Polner, *Tolstoy and His Wife*, p. 179.
125 *Ibid.*
126 *Ibid*, pp. 181-182.
127 Leo Tolstoy, *Essays and Letters*, p. 287.
128 Ernest J. Simmons, *Leo Tolstoy*, p. 460.
129 *Ibid*, p. 504.
130 Count Lev N. Tolstoy, *Miscellaneous Letters and Essays*, p. 555.
131 Tikhon Polner, *Tolstoy and His Wife*, p. 192.
132 *Ibid*, p. 193.
133 Count Leo Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, p. 136.
134 Count Leo Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God and Peace Essays*, translated by Aylmer Maude, Oxford University Press, London, (1951), p. 202.
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136 *Ibid*, p. 209.
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138 *Ibid.*
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141 Leo Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God and Peace Essays*, p. 212.
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GLOSSARY

Achetan: inert.
Advaita: monism.
Ahimsa: non-violence; love.
Akhara: gymnasium.
Anekantavad: the doctrine of manyness of truth.
Anuvrata: the graduated observance of the five *yamas* enjoined upon householders.
Arya: noble; mighty; cultured.
Ashram: a retreat or home for community living.
Atman: spirit; soul.
Ayurveda: the Hindu system of medicine.
Ba: mother.
Brahmacharya: observance of chastity or continence in the quest for God.
Brahman: the Universal Spirit.
Chapati: unleavened bread.
Chaturmas: four months of the rainy season from June to September.
Chela: disciple.
Daridranarayana: god incarnated as poor.
Dhedh: untouchable.
Dhoby: washerman.
Dholl: pulses.
Dhoti: loin cloth; a long piece of cloth worn by Indians.
Durbargarh: the palace of the Rajkot ruler.
Ekadashi: the eleventh day of a lunar month, observed, as a day of fasting by the orthodox Hindus.
Erf: site.
Erven: sites.
Fidvi: devoted servant.
Gaddi: throne.
Go-raksha: cow protection.
Guru: teacher.
Gurukul: forest university in ancient India.
Hartal: strike.
Haveli: a vaishnava temple.
Herrenvolk: master race.
Impis: regiments.
Indunas: South African Native head-men.
Jhoola festival: the festival of swings.
Jnana: knowledge.
Kamini kanchan: woman and gold.
Kanthi: sacred necklace.
Karbhari: dewan.
Karma: actions.
Kathi: an inhabitant of Kathiawar.
Kathiawari: –do–
Khutpat: intrigue.

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Landdrosts: dutch for Governor.
Lobola: dowry in the reverse— paid by parents of bridegroom.
Mahant: chief priest of a temple.
Mela: fair.
Meman: a sect among the Muslims.
Moi-dandiyo: a popular Indian game played with a double-ended wedge and a rod of wood.
Moksha: liberation.
Mungdal: a variety of Indian pulses.
Murabbi: a respected elderly person.
Narayana: one of the names of God.
Nika: muslim form of marriage.
Pujaghar: room set apart for worship.
Radha: beloved of Lord Krishna in the Hindu devotional lore.
Raj: government.
Ramanama: the name of Rama—incarnation of God in Hindu religion.
Ras: a variety of dance associated with Krishna worship.
Sabha: meeting, conference.
Sadhana: striving; practice.
Samadhi: state of ecstasy.
Samiti: association.
Sandhya: daily morning and evening worship.
Sannyasins: a Hindu recluse, one who has renounced the world.
Sat: being; Ultimate Reality.
Satya: truth.
Satyagraha: literally, holding on to truth; truth-force or soul-force.
Satyagrahi: one who practises Satyagraha.
Shakti: the principle of Energy in Hindu philosophy.
Shastra: sacred Hindu writing, scripture
Stoep: The terraced veranda in front of a house.
Sjambok: rhinoceros-hide whip.
Swami: a title of respect used for Hindu spiritual teachers, literally master.
Syadvad: the doctrine of "may be" in Jaina philosophy.
Tapasya: austerity, penance or asceticism.
Trekboer: Dutch frontiersmen, almost nomadic, pastoral people, accustomed to isolation, self-reliant, impatient of control, intensely individualistic.
Uitlanders: outlander or foreigner.
Urad dal: a variety of Indian pulses.
Vaidya: an indigenous doctor, a practitioner of Hindu system of medicine.
Vaishnava: A follower of the devotional Hindu sect formed on the worship of Vishnu, the god of creation in the Hindu religion.
Vande Mataram: "Hail Mother"—the cry of Indian fighters for freedom.
Vasudeva: a name of Lord Krishna.
Veth: impressed, unpaid labour.
Virat: the cosmic aspect of reality.

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finds nothing extraordinary in Christianity to warrant change of faith on his part 314-315; writes *Guide to London*, 316-317; conducts experiment in "Vital Food", 318-319; becomes agent for London Vegetarian Society in South Africa, appeals to Indian vegetarians in England to become members of the L.V.S., recommends vegetarianism as cure for the liquor habit, 320; propaganda for vegetarianism in South Africa, 320-321; writes to Edward Maitland, reads *The New Interpretation of the Bible* and *The Perfect Way*, 321; influence of Edward Maitland's writings seen in his conception of Brahmacharya, his interpretation of the Indian Epics and in his belief in "reasoned faith", 324; publishes blurb on E. C. U. (Esoteric Christian Union) publications in *Natal Mercury* and *Natal Advertiser*, 325; letter to Mrs Lewis in connection with E. C. U., 326; Muslims tried to convert him to Islam, 327; addresses twenty-seven questions in a letter to Rajchandra about institution of untouchability, status of women, contradictory texts in the scriptures, and about non-killing, 327; advised by him to make a deeper study of Hinduism, 329; formulates views on 'one true religion', fundamental unity of all religions, nature of salvation and how it may be attained, 330-331; finds himself in a strange land of anomalies and contradictions, 332; faces colour bar that had its roots in four centuries of conflict between black and white, 333; influenced by Ruskin's and Sir Edwin Arnold's ideas, 348; eulogised by General Smuts, 376; on the religion of Africans, 377; brought to India a wooden pillow used by Africans in their kraals, 380; praises Zulus, 383; points the hope to Africans, 384; shows that the Europeans' fear of being outvoted by Indians is groundless, 398; on Europeans' contempt for Indians, 399; replies to *Natal Advertiser's* diatribe against the Asiatic traders, 400-401; Sydenham Farewell Party in his honour, 413; learns about the Franchise Bill, 414; is prevailed upon to postpone his departure, 415; waits in deputation on Natal Premier and other influential representatives, 418; takes a deputation to Natal Governor, 420; writes to the *Times of Natal* protesting against its attitude towards Indians, 424-425; his appeal dubbed as "offensive" by the *Times of Natal*, 426; his first letter to Dadabhai Naoroji, 428; enlightened Dadabhai about real intention behind Franchise Bill, 430; decides to remain in Natal indefinitely 431; sets about to found Natal Indian Congress, 435; objects to swelling ranks of congress with sterile membership, 436; invites Europeans to Congress meetings, 437; impresses upon members of the Natal Indian Congress the need for personal and corporate cleanliness, and truth, and danger of exaggeration 439; scrupulous care of public funds, 440; emphasis on strict keeping of public accounts, 441; admitted as an advocate of the Natal Supreme Court despite the Natal Law Society's opposition, 442-444; agrees to remove his turban in court, 444; makes his debut in Natal court in Gopi Maharaj case, 445; is congratulated by *Advertiser* on being winner in his first case, 446; joins issue with Sir Walter Wragg on interpretation of Mohammedan law, 447-448; appears for Roberts and Richards in case under Vagrant Law, 452; protests in the *Natal Mercury* against Durban Police Superin-

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tendent's strictures on Indian lads, 453-455; cultivates friendship of Superintendent of Police, 455; his "Open Letter" to members of Natal Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly, 465-478; becomes Gujarati interpreter and translator in the Natal Supreme Court, 469-70; Natal European's reaction to "Open Letter", 471; his efforts to unite the hearts of the Europeans and Indians in Natal, 473; *Natal Mercury's* comments, 474; his sporting offer to the Editor, *Natal Mercury*, 475; his talents recognised by South African Europeans, 476; his appreciation for an opponent who was frank and sincere, 477; touched to the quick by *Critic's* remarks on untouchability, 478; described by a Cape paper as "an Indian Moses", 479; appears in Rungasamy Padiyachi case, 481; defends Natal Indian Congress against false charges, 484; reply to insinuations by "H", 484, 486, 487, 489; his house in Durban, 491; helps Joseph Royappan go to England for studies, 492; asks Sheikh Mehtab to leave his house, 493; espouses Bala Sundaram's case, 493-495; helps obtain redress for indentured Indian labourers in the Natal Government Railways, 496; challenges the *Natal Advertiser's* report of court proceedings in the case against Railway employees, 497-499; addresses a petition to the members of the Natal Legislature opposing Indian Immigration Amendment Bill, 510; gets £25 poll tax of Natal reduced to £3, 414; drafts petition to Mr Chamberlain opposing Indian Immigration Amendment Bill, 515; states his grounds for opposition to the Natal Annual Tax, 518; helps Indians in Zululand and in the Transvaal Republic, 528; characterises the De Villiers Award on the South African Republic—British Indian dispute as iniquitous, 530, 532; draws up memorial against regulations for the Eshowe Township, 540; writes to Dadabhai Naoroji about injustice done to Zululand Indians, 541; his memorial against Commando Treaty submitted, 543; visits the Settlement of Trappist missionaries at Mariann Hill, 545; *Natal Mercury* has a dig at him, 549, 550; his attempt to lead Natal whites back to the plane of reason, 558; refutes Maston T. Francis, 559; Mr Smythe's remarks on him, 561, 562, 565, 569, 570, 575, 576, 577, 582; his appeal to every Briton in South Africa, 583-592, 594, 595, 598, 601, 602, 603; compliments "G.W.W.", while replying to his criticism, on personal fairness shown to him, 604; protests against Natal Premier's strictures in Natal Parliament on Natal Indian Congress, 615; his subsequent relations with the Natal Premier, 616, 618, 620-621; his inner transformation since arrival in Natal, books by Tolstoy that he read, describes himself as the Count's "humble follower", 627-628; Tolstoy indicates to him application of ancient truths proclaimed by India's seers to removal of social, political and economic ills, influenced all round by Tolstoy, 628, 632; reading *What Shall We Do then?* gives social colouring to his religious views, influenced by Tolstoy's views on art and science and progress, 644; Tostoy's criticism of the professions reflected in *Indian Home Rule*—translates into Gujarati *Ivan the Fool*, founds Phoenix and Tolstoy settlements to propagate Tolstoy's ideals, 645; disastrous result of his experiment with milkless diet and raw food, 647; moved profoundly by Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan*

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and Gokhale, adopts Gokhale as poltical *guru*, 723-724; public meeting at Madras, 724; challenges the statement of Sir Walter Peace, 725; goes to Calcutta and meets Ellerthorpe of London *Daily Telegraph*, has experience of racial prejudice in Bengal Club, is advised by Surendranath Banerjee to see Raja Pyare Mohan Mukarji, and Maharaja Jyotindra Nath Tagore, is given cold shoulder by them, is taken for a "wandering Jew" by the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, is kept on doormat by the *Bengalee*, 726; his work appreciated by an ex-member of the British Parliament, 727; receives telegram for return to South Africa, writes letter to *Englishman* explaining reasons for his return to South Africa, offer by Dada Abdullah of free passage for him and family by the s. s. *Courland*, 727; organises a meeting at Poona, 728; search for Indian barristers for South Africa, 728; addresses meeting at Poona, meets Pestonji Padshah, unsuccessful attempts to persuade F.S. Talyarkhan, and Keshav Rao Deshpande to go to South Africa for law practice and public work, 727-721; his attitude on riches based on Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*, prepares statement of expenses in India, sets sail for South Africa with wife, two sons and Gokuldas by the s.s. *Naderi*; 730; hears rumblings from South Africa, 730

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have this insight, we do not quarrel over the names we give to Him or the approaches we adopt to reach Him. . . . *Sarva Dharma Samãnatva* (equality of all religions) was an essential part of his faith. His universality of outlook showed itself in his dealings with others.

Those who read Shri Pyarelal's writings on Gandhiji will be struck by the prophetic quality of Gandhiji's genius, his practical good sense and his love for humanity. Gokhale's memorable words, which he said in 1912, have been confirmed by a lifetime of devotion, dedication and sacrifice:

> A purer, a nobler, a braver and a more exalted spirit has never moved on this earth. . . . He is a man who may well be described as a man among men, a hero among heroes, a patriot among patriots, and we may well say that in him Indian humanity at the present time has really reached its high-water mark.

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